

Santa Clarita Track Club, Inc
2008
Cross Country
Parents Handbook
<http://www.sctc-storm.org>

To: All Parents and Athletes

From: SCTC Cross Country Staff

On behalf of the Santa Clarita Track Club (SCTC), it is our pleasure to welcome you to the 2008 Cross Country Season.

SCTC is a non profit organization that promotes sports for youth. Tax ID # 77-0615715.

The Santa Clarita Track Club is made up of board members and coaches that are all volunteers. These volunteers are parents much like you. Because this is all done on a volunteer basis, your help, support, and cooperation is critical for this program to be a success. To promote cooperation and to ensure that a few individuals will not be doing all the work for many, we sincerely hope and encourage each parent/guardian to participate in helping to accomplish the various functions of the club (i.e. coaching, timers, data entry, clothing sales, fundraisers, etc.)

To help you understand more about the Santa Clarita Track Club's program and philosophy, we are providing you with this Parent Pack. It contains information regarding our club's purpose, conduct during cross country meets, and useful information concerning parent conduct and safety rules for training.

Hopefully, your questions will be answered by reading this packet. Please contact any of the individuals listed below if you have any further questions or wish to review any of the points contained in this packet.

PARENT AND ADULT PARTICIPATION

The number of participants in the SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB'S Cross Country Program varies from season to season. Parent and adult participation IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL. It takes approximately one adult for every 3 athletes to coach and administrate the SCTC's Cross Country Program. During competitions with other cross country teams, Valley Youth Conference programs, and post season programs, additional adult participation may also be necessary.

WE EXPECT YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SCTC'S CROSS COUNTRY PROGRAM. There are many opportunities (job descriptions) available. EXPERIENCE IS NOT A REQUIREMENT, NOR IS IT NECESSARY, FOR MOST OF THE POSITIONS.

There are many types of jobs, which require adult support in order to make each cross country season successful. These jobs are both on and off the course. We expect adults to be part of the SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB team by fulfilling and taking responsibility for the many available positions. The SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB must have the COMMITMENT OF THE PARENTS AND ADULTS representing the athletes. We depend and RELY on you to VOLUNTEER.

CHILD WELFARE

The Santa Clarita Track Club is sensitive to inappropriate behavior toward children. The Valley Youth Conference requires that all individuals in direct contact with your children fill out a volunteer application sheet. We may be performing random screenings of references and information. All of the information given will be processed and maintained in a confidential and professional manner.

ABILITIES AND LEVELS OF CROSS COUNTRY ATHLETES

The SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB does not pre-qualify young athletes with regard to their physical or mental capacity to participate and perform in this organization. The only requirement is that they meet age and medical requirements established by the Valley Youth Conference Track and Field/Cross Country Program.

The SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB'S coaching staff will determine from the beginning and will continuously re-evaluate throughout the season the athlete's development and physical abilities for seeding purposes. Some general standards, which will be observed to determine an athlete's qualifications, are as follows:

1. Attendance and timeliness at practices and meets.
2. Focus on instructions of coaching.
3. Dedication and determination on carrying out coaching procedure.
4. Commitment to team spirit.
5. Camaraderie and interaction with other athletes and adults in the program.
6. Respectful attitude for cross country etiquette.
7. Obeying and observing cross country rules.
8. Having proper attire and equipment at all times for warm-up, warm-down, cross training, plyometrics, special event training and meet competition.
9. Maintenance and care of uniforms, equipment, and facilities.
10. Maintaining acceptable academic standards.
11. Performance level in competition.

These are a few of the standards that will be used to determine how the athlete is seeded, in addition to those already described elsewhere in this handbook.

THERE WILL BE COACHING STAFF SKILLED AND READY TO WORK WITH THE ATHLETE'S LEVEL OF CAPABILITIES. Willingness to participate, in and of itself, is a very acceptable level and standard for membership in the SANTA CLARITA TRACK CLUB.

IMPORTANCE OF WARM-UP, STRETCHING AND COOL DOWN

Everything we do has a reason. It is essential we instill in our kids the importance of proper warm-up and stretching before a practice or race, followed by a proper cool-down.

For the body to operate at peak levels and stay injury free, our athletes need to follow this procedure before and after each race and at every practice session.

Instructions on the proper technique of warm-up/cool-down will be given at every practice.

Parents, please help support our efforts to instill this in our athletes.

1. Upon arrival at the course for practice, your child should run the required amount of distance **WITHOUT** being told.
2. Do not leave practice without your child doing at least 1 cool-down lap.
3. On meet days, remind your child that they need to warm-up, stretch, and cool down for their race.
4. At the meets, age group coaches may be busy, so have your child get in the habit of doing the stretches themselves, or with the other kids in their age group preparing for the same race.

PRACTICES

Our first practice is planned for **Monday, August 4th at 6:00 p.m. at Heritage Park**. Practices may be held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday nights at 6:00 pm and on Saturday Mornings at 8:00 am. It is not necessary to attend all practices, but if an athlete does not train for their competition, they may not perform at peak levels. We recommend that athletes attend all practices and follow all instruction. A calendar of practices will be published on the clubs website, and should be available in the weekly newsletter. The athletes will be sore following the first 2 weeks but as they condition that soreness will leave.

All practices begin promptly at their designated starting times, you should try to arrive early to stretch prior to the workout. Practices begin with a short warm-up run and 10-15 minutes of dynamic warm up drills. After the warm-ups, we will proceed to conditioning the athletes by doing workouts designed for them to achieve their goals. The duration and type of running varies. We will usually run for 30-60 minutes. Sometimes it will be a long sustained run, and other times it will be broken up into intervals with rest in between. Practices finish with some organized stretching. Until the meets begin, practices will end by 7:30. Once meets begin, practices will end about 7:15 on week nights, 9:30 am on Saturdays. **Please pick up your child on time.**

During hot weather, loose shorts and tops are fine for practice. When the weather turns cooler, please make sure that the athlete has some warm clothes (sweats, jacket, pants) to put on after practice. This is very important. Also, please send along a bottle of **water** to help keep the athlete hydrated during and immediately after practice.

Our practice schedule has a rotating format, please be sure to check the calendar, the locations will vary from day to day. Once we start practicing you will be notified of the upcoming practice locations a week ahead of time in the newsletter and on the web site www.sctc-storm.org

There will be no practice if it is raining significantly, but we may run through light or off-and-on drizzle in some cases. Please do not call one of the coaches or board members before practice,

if it is a close call we'll probably head to the practice sight and decide at the last minute. Use your judgment as to whether you want to drive to the site in these cases.

At all practices and meets, athletes and their parents are expected to abide by usual standards of good behavior. No use of alcohol, profanity, taunting, fighting, or verbal abuse will be tolerated. Any person violating any of the above will be asked to leave immediately and further action may be taken.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

A practice schedule will be given to each athlete during the first week of practice.

LIST AND DESCRIPTION OF NEEDED VOLUNTEERS

Meet Days

Field preparation: The morning set-up of the equipment and field prior to the meet (five or more)

Tag puller: Helping to remove the name tags from the athletes after they cross the finish line and giving tags to head tag puller (six to eight people needed)

Head tag puller: Collecting tags from the athletes and placing them in order of their lane assignment (one to two people needed)

Typing results into computer: Our league is computerized and we type the results as the meet progresses (one person needed at a time)

Event announcer: We have a PA system available and need people to announce upcoming events, during the meet (one to two people needed)

Course teardown: As the meet comes to an end, we need people to help put away the equipment (five to however many show up)

Non-Meet Positions

Coaching: If you are a runner of any ability-level, we would love to have you help coach one of our groups. Even if you can't help at every practice, running once or twice a week can really help our program and provide a high level of individual attention for each athlete.

Age group parent: People who are willing to help with an age group by: calling about events and fundraisers, as well as coordinating and distributing information to the athletes (like a room parent)

Fund raising: People to help coordinate the club's fundraisers in order to keep entry fees low, help our athletes, and upgrade our equipment

Board member candidate: Help the Santa Clarita Track Club be the best we can be

Memory Book / video: Find and collect newspaper articles, course maps, pictures, etc. for a book to hand out to all athletes at the end of the year.

Snack Table: Set up and run the snack concession stand for our home meet. We will need many helpers for this one-time event. You would sign up for certain time period that would not overlap with your own child's race.

Practice help: Hand out flyers, watch small children so that coaches can run with athletes, help with timing and recording during time-trials, etc., etc.

Personal-Records: Keep track of the times from the time-trials, and fill out and hand out PR ribbons.

Uniform/Merchandise sales: Hand out uniforms and keep track of Storm ware sales.

Coaching: Even if you are not (yet) a runner, you can still help with the beginning group which starts at a slower pace and increases their workout gradually. We welcome all the help we can get (and it's good for you too).

Coaching: ah did we mention that?

All of the positions listed above range from painfully **easy** to moderately **easy**. There is **no need for past experience**: we will train you on how to do everything. Remember that every family must volunteer in order for the program to be successful and to maximize the benefit for each child. The more volunteers, the faster and smoother the meet runs. So don't delay, sign up today. Thank you.

HOME MEETS

The **Santa Clarita Track Club** wishes to maintain our reputation of running efficient, well organized home meets. This can only be accomplished through parental participation. **WE NEED AND WILL BE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP!**

Please do not hesitate to volunteer because of a lack of experience. It takes only a few minutes to show anyone how to help with the tasks required. **CROSS COUNTRY MEETS ARE ALWAYS MORE FUN IF YOU'RE INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES.**

CROSS COUNTRY ETIQUETTE

At any cross country meet, everyone is requested to observe certain rules of etiquette.

- > When the field is not open to the public, do not enter unless requested to be there.
- > When crossing the course, be aware of races in progress. Treat the course as if it were a busy roadway.
- > NEVER "poor mouth" other competitors. Taunting and baiting is prohibited.
- > DO NOT pace (run along-side) any runner during a race. This will result in the disqualification of that runner.
- > Keep all non-club members (brothers, sisters, friends, relatives) under supervision.

We expect our athletes (and parents) to behave in a sportsmanlike manner. You are a reflection of our club, so please act accordingly. You belong to a club that is well respected in the Valley Conference. **BE PROUD OF IT!**

MEET PROCEDURE

The competition uniform that was provided is the only one allowed for use during the meets. If tights are worn, then the competition shorts **MUST** be worn over them.

Athletes should report to their Age Group Coach at least 30 minutes before their scheduled

event for warm-up.

Nametags will be available at the nametag table. Athletes checking in to running events without tags will not be allowed to run.

Please note

Ribbons will be awarded to all participating athletes. Ribbons will be handed out at practice the week following the meet. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD AN ATHLETE ASK FOR HIS/HER TIME OR RIBBON AT THE SCORING TABLE.**

MEETS

Meets begin in mid- to late September. There are meets for 6 consecutive weekends, with the last one being the Valley Youth Conference Finals. All meets are on Saturdays except for the Free Spirit Invitational at Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. Sac) in Walnut, which is a USATF-sanctioned meet and is usually held on a Sunday (tentatively scheduled for October 9 this year). The complete schedule will be made available soon. Athletes must participate in at least 3 meets prior to competing in the VYC Finals to be eligible for medals at the finals.

The meets are held at parks or other cross-country venues in the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, Simi, and Conejo valleys. Because cross-country teams are smaller than Track-and-Field teams, all teams in the conference participate at every meet.

Runners should arrive at the meets **by 8:00 at the latest** to sign in and get their name tag, which is required at the finish line. Meets start with a walk-through of the course at 8:30. This serves as a good warm-up and shows the athletes where they will be running. The first race begins at 9:00, with the last one ending by about noon. Each athlete runs in one race per meet. The distance depends on the age group. Gremlin Girls run first, up through Intermediate Boys. Directions to each meet will be passed out at practice the week before the meet. We will be hosting one meet at Central Park, which will require a lot of help from parent volunteers.

The courses for Gremlins (born 1999-2001) are 2 km (about 1.2 miles). The courses for Bantams (born 1997-98) and Midgets (born 1995-96) are 3 km (about 1.8 miles). The courses for Youth (born 1993-94) and Intermediates (born 1991-92) are 4 km (about 2.5 miles).

Runners receive a ribbon for each meet, as well as a trophy for the entire season.

DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT

In the past, the Santa Clarita Track Club has been very lax about monitoring whether or not the runners have properly participated in the stretching and plyometric exercises. If your child is late to practices, they will have to stretch with the late crew, at a designated area on the field.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL YOUR CHILD BE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE WITHOUT HAVING A PROPER WARM-UP. Also your child will not be allowed to leave the practice without doing a "*cool down lap*". If you have to leave the practice before the scheduled finish time, please allow enough time for this important portion of the practice. It is in the best interest of your child that he/she adheres to this rule.

All coaches will be addressed as "coach" by the runners, calling them "coach" and the first or last name of that particular coach. With the lack of respect by some of the youth these days, we at the Santa Clarita Track Club feel that this is a good opportunity to instill some respect for

adults.

COMMUNICATION

As parents we always want to do what is best for our children. You know your kids better than anyone else. In the event that there is information about your child that would be beneficial to the age group coach, please let them know. **HOWEVER**, one cannot expect a conversation with a coach to take precedence over the practice. The age group coaches are limited in the time they have with the runners. Without the full attention of the coach the practice turns to chaos. If you need to talk to the coach, **PLEASE** wait until the end of practice, or make some other arrangements.

NUTRITION

Let's not get carried away. Certain guidelines are important.

If you serve your child a balanced meal and stay away from the fatty fast food restaurants, you go a long way in allowing your child to perform at his peak level.

It is important to get your child on a proper eating program that is balanced in protein (10-15%), carbohydrates (55-65%), and fats (25-30%).

Some examples of good foods the night before a meet might be:

Protein: Chicken, fish, beans, dairy, eggs.

Carbohydrates: Potatoes, pasta, bread, vegetables, frozen yogurt.

Fats: Butter, margarine.

Try CHICKEN PARMESAN, or SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALLS, with milk as a drink. Frozen yogurt is a great desert. **HIDE THE SOFT DRINKS**

POST SEASON VALLEY STRIDERS

The Santa Clarita Track Club supports the Valley Striders, which is the Conference-affiliated post-season team comprised of runners from within our Conference that want to compete in the National Junior Olympic Program.

After the regular season is over (after the VYC Conference Finals), you are invited to participate in what are referred to as the "Post Season" races. The top athletes from all of the VYC teams join to form one team called the Valley Striders. The top runners, based on times during the regular season, are invited to participate on this team. For each age/sex division the teams will consist of 8 or 16 runners (depending on whether there is interest and funds for a "B" team). They will run 1 or 2 races after the end of the regular season to try to qualify for the National Championships (either through the USATF or the AAU) in December, usually located in another state. If you do not intend to compete in December at Nationals, you should not accept an invitation to join the post season team. However, you may run as an individual in any of the post season races. More details will be made available later in the season. Post season is a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun and very rewarding. The level of competition is quite high and not

all runners will want to participate due to the commitment required. Our teams usually do very well in the national meets and we hope to have another good showing this year.

PHOTOGRAPHS

All parents are encouraged to take pictures for our memory book. We love action photos, candid shots of the athletes at practices and before races, and shots of our parents, coaches, and other supporters too! A person will be designated to whom you can give the photos once they are developed. After they are incorporated into the memory book, they will be given back at the end of the season (be sure to put your name on the back of the photos).

LAP-A-THON / FUNDRAISER

Early in the season (about the 3rd or 4th week, before meets begin), we will have a Lap-A-Thon fundraiser. During this event, which will be held at a location to be announced later, each athlete runs as many laps as he/she can in one hour. They are of course allowed to rest as needed. Before the Lap-A-Thon, they will be asked to secure donations from friends and family members, either on a per-lap basis, or as a flat rate. Athletes who raise a certain amount will receive a special Lap-A-Thon T-shirt.

STORM SERIES / FUNDRAISER

We have a public all comers race which starts on Thursday August 24, The cost of this race is \$3.00, we use the proceeds from this race to help our post season athletes with their travel expenses. The races are held on Thursday evenings at 6:30, We need your help in putting this race on. We will need course monitors, registration personnel, Timers, tag pullers, in general we need your help.

SCHOLASTIC AWARDS

All athletes who maintain a B+ or better grade point average in school will receive a special plaque at the end of the season. Forms to verify qualification will be available at signups or from the coaches later in the season. These forms must be filled out by the teacher, signed by the parent, and turned in by the specified deadline for the athlete to receive a plaque.

UNIFORMS & MEET ATTIRE

The signup fees for each runner include a uniform which consists of a singlet and shorts in team colors. Uniforms will be handed out the week leading up to the first meet, if not earlier. These **must be worn to every meet** in order to compete. If the weather is cold, then a T-shirt or tights can be worn **under** the uniform as long as they are of a plain, solid color which roughly matches the uniform colors. Long hair can be held back with small, simple items at the meets (e.g., scrunchies or clips), but large, extravagant hair items are not permitted.

* **SHOES:** Each runner also needs a pair of training (running) shoes. This is a requirement in order to prevent damage to the athlete's muscular and bone structures. The shoes do not have to be expensive, but they must be designed to take the impact produced by cross country running. Most shoes for other sports, especially very heavy shoes (such as basketball shoes and high-tops) are not appropriate. Please see a coach if you have any questions about your athlete's training shoes. Running Wilde [(661) 251-1207] can help order children's sizes of appropriate running shoes if needed. Track spikes are not appropriate for practices or meets.

For the meets, most runners simply wear their training shoes, but lightweight racing flats or cross-country shoes are an option. However, this is a significant additional expense for shoes to be worn only 6 times, and the slight time difference they provide is only noticed by the oldest, most experienced runners (if at all). These can also be difficult to find in smaller sizes. Thus, we generally don't recommend that these be purchased unless you are very sure that you want them.

REFUND POLICY

If for any reason your child wishes to withdraw from the Santa Clarita Track Club, You must contact a board member listed at the front of this packet and inform them of your request to withdraw from the team, the following refund scheduled will apply.

Withdraw prior to August 4, 2008	100% Refund
Withdraw August 4, 2008 to August 9, 2008	50% Refund
Withdraw August 10, 2008 or later	No Refund Issued

Merchandise sales are final, sorry no refunds.

***** IMPORTANT DATES *****

Date	Location	Time	Event
August 4	Central Park	6:00pm	First Day of Practice
September 20	Corriganville Park	8:30am	Picture Day
September 27	Pierce College	8:30am	Meet
October 5	Free Spirit Invitational Meet	8:00am	Mt SAC
October 11	United	8:30am	Meet
October 18	Central Park SCV	8:30am	Meet
October 25	O'Melvany Park	8:30am	Final Meet
November 2	SCV Sports Complex	6:00pm	Awards Banquet