

Cardinal Gibbons Cross Country

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Welcome to Cardinal Gibbons. You are receiving this letter if you indicated interest in running cross country this coming fall. Our team has much to offer the high school student-athlete.

What should I do to get in shape? We meet at least three days a week during the summer: Mondays at Bayview Park (6:30pm), Thursdays at Running Wild (6:30pm), and Saturdays at Mills Pond Park (8am). Running Wild is located at 1133 N. Federal Hwy. in Ft. Lauderdale. The ideal base training for each runner varies, depending on his or her level of experience. A beginner should gradually increase his or her mileage to an average of 1-3 a day and six days a week by mid-August. The goal is simple: prepare your body for more serious practices in the fall. Stretching properly is also key. These summer runs are a good opportunity to get in shape in an informal environment. We're able to offer the weeknight runs thanks to our partnership with the Greater Ft. Lauderdale Road Runners Club. At least one of our coaches is at every summer run. Call Coach Scott (954.655.9183) before coming to find out if the run has been moved or cancelled due to weather.

Who can run? There is a place in our program for anyone who shows consistent effort. In most of our races, the varsity and J.V. run together. Swimming and track are the only other sports that don't cap participation in regular season competition. We practice six days a week once the school year starts. *When* each runner is ready to race is a mutual decision between the runner and the coaching staff. Attendance at practice is an overriding factor.

Who are the coaches? Coach Lee is beginning his 33rd year heading the Gibbons team. He's now had several team parents who ran for him. He is a member of both the Gibbons and the state coaches' hall of fame. Coach Lee was named Coach of the Year by both the *Sun Sentinel* and the *Miami Herald* this past year. With over 800 wins, he is considered the "Dean" of Broward coaches. By day he teaches English to freshmen. Coach Scott is a 2002 Gibbons graduate. In high school, he was All-County and the team's captain. He returned to the program after running collegiately in North Carolina. Coach Santamarina is a firefighter and paramedic for Ft. Lauderdale. His son just graduated from Gibbons. Coach Santa himself ran for Gibbons in 1983. Coach Kwaterski ran for Key West High just a few years ago. She works for New York Life and volunteers her time running with our girls on a near-daily basis.

Can I do another sport? Yes. Distance runners usually run cross country in the fall and track in the spring. However, our runners have starred in basketball, soccer, wrestling, tennis, baseball, softball, boys' volleyball, lacrosse, and water polo. Of course, many runners go out for the Track & Field team in January. Coach Steve Lyons and his 10 assistants teach the 14 individual events to the largest (100+) team in the school. All of the cross country coaches also work with the track program.

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What does it cost? Our parents help out, and donate what they can, but our program is proud to be one of the few that doesn't have to charge our families a participation fee of any kind. We offer everything from t-shirts to trips for free. Through our hosting of meets, we generate funds that make us self-sustaining. Our coaches, runners, and parents have taken the lead in hosting nearly all of the local major cross country meets the past few years. We will be hosting seven meets this fall, including the County meet (Sep. 25), Conference championship (Oct. 23), and District and Regional (Nov. 13) championships. Our County Championship is unique because it is open to all schools both public and private, a competition all 52 large and small schools are invited to. All of our home events are held at Mills Pond Park (you can see it from I-95 off Oakland Park Blvd). We take every safety precaution and are known for our water tables along the course.

Will I have time for homework? Our runners are some of the best-rounded teenagers you'll meet. Their success academically and in the community has been highlighted by National Merit Scholars, valedictorians, student body presidents, and Silver Knight nominations. A majority of our runners are inducted into the National Honor Society. Some of their service hours are done as a team, handing out water at road races throughout the year. We have the highest team GPA at CGHS.

Do we usually win? We've been represented at the state finals every year for four decades. We usually bring a large group on the overnight trip, and usually visit an amusement park on the way home. Our girls are defending Champions of the County, Conference, and Region. In other words, last year we beat every team we raced until the state championship. Our boys are consistently one of the top five teams in the county and have won the district two of the past three years. Over the years, our runners have gone on to run for UM, FSU, UF, FAU, and a host of out-of-state colleges.

What makes it a team sport? The top five runners' places are added up and the lowest score wins, so the team is only as strong as its weakest member. Over a four-year period, some of the most unlikely athletes develop into key contributors and dynamic leaders as the team's tradition is passed down. Along the way, we have a blast. From pizza parties to movie nights, a cross country runner knows their teammates are always there for support and friendship. Many runners have so much fun, they find they can't stay away—our alumni play an active role as role models and training partners. From our base of hundreds of former Gibbonite runners, we use different record-holders and individual champions each year to hand out our awards at meets.

When do we start? The first official practice is on August 17th after school in Room D204 (the first day of school). For more information, contact Coach Lee (glee@cghsfl.org) or Coach Scott (scott@cghsfl.org). The coaches must have the following on file before you're eligible to practice: a current notarized FHSAA physical form, parent consent forms, and a birth certificate (we'll return it the next day). The forms are enclosed.

As our program enters its 39th season, we invite you to be a part of the excitement that is *Cardinal Gibbons Cross Country*.

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