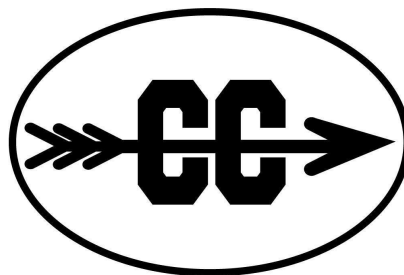


# LAUREL KNIGHTHAWKS

## 2025 Cross-Country Handbook



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# Knighthawks Cross-Country Handbook

## Program Summary:

Knighthawks Cross-Country was founded in 2023 to provide opportunities for home-schooled athletes in the Laurel, MS region to compete in the sport of Cross-Country. The program aims to build character in a Christ-centered environment through athletic competition.

PLAY WITH HONOR  
FINISH STRONG  
GIVE GOD THE GLORY

## KNIGHTHAWKS CROSS-COUNTRY COMMITTEE

### Coaching Staff:

#### Middle School (M.S.)/Varsity Head Coach:

Bryan Hanna  
bhanna.airkewled@gmail.com  
(509) 392-3403

#### M.S./Varsity Assistant Coach:

Sabrina Walters  
Sabrinamadisonwalters@gmail.com  
(601) 335-4827

#### Elementary Head Coach:

Rachel Neal  
Reneal25@hotmail.com  
(601) 422-3289

### Administration:

#### Team Assistant:

Eric Roberts  
eric@robertscreative.com  
(601) 319-3859

#### Equipment/Uniforms/Apparel:

Kristen Heidleberg  
kheidleberg08@gmail.com  
(601) 580-2275

### Additional Committee Members:

Kelly Woodard  
krbwoodard@gmail.com  
(601) 517-5062

Mayumi Lilley  
mw\_daisy@hotmail.com  
(601) 422-9249

Amanda Roberts  
amanda@tannerfarms.net  
(601) 319-6627

## **Program Rules:**

Knighthawks Cross-Country (Program) adopts the rules of the Mid-South Association of Homeschool Athletics (MSAHA) Rulebook (Current Revision). These rules will govern all MSAHA hosted meets. A copy of the MSAHA Rulebook is available at <https://msaha.org/documents/>.

As described in the MSAHA Rulebook, all cross-country competition will be governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Cross-Country Rules except as modified by the MSAHA. NFHS Cross-Country Rules are available for purchase at <https://www.nfhs.org/resources/publications/>.

Non-MSAHA hosted meets will be governed by the adopted rules of the hosting conference.

## **Participation/Eligibility:**

The Program is open to all home-schooled athletes in Grades 1 through 12. The athlete must be home-schooled as defined by MSAHA Rule 2.1.

*“Homeschooling is defined to mean that a student’s education is parent-directed. As such, the parents shall be involved in their child’s education by assuming the role of principal or headmaster, thereby (1) setting the date and requirements for high school graduation; (2) selecting and approving course materials and study schedules; and (3) selecting tutors, teachers, co-op’s, correspondence courses, videos, computer courses and similar resources for their child’s education...Homeschooling does not recognize or include students who are enrolled in a traditional public or private school and who are completing their course work remotely from home.”*

- Ref. MSAHA Rule 2.1

Athletes must be currently enrolled as a home-schooled student. Graduated students are not eligible, regardless of age.

All eligible athletes in the program may compete in every regular season meet, including the MSAHA championship meet. There are no team cuts or limits to the number of athletes registered in each division.

## Age Divisions:

Divisions are defined by age on August 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year.

Cross-Country Divisions		
Elementary	Grade 1-5	Ages 6-10
Middle School	Grade 6-8	Ages 11-13
Varsity	Grade 9-12	Ages 14-17

Athletes in 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade may compete in the Elementary or Middle School division. Athletes in 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade may compete in the Middle School or Varsity division. Athletes in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade must compete in the Varsity division. An athlete may not compete in more than one division at the same meet.

### Elementary – Ages 6-10 (Grades 1-5)

Athletes in the Elementary division will typically compete on courses 1-mile in length, although there may be events that include a 2-mile Elementary race. Not all cross-country meets include an Elementary division. See meet details for more information.

### Middle School – Ages 11-13 (Grades 6-8)

Athletes in the Middle School division will typically compete on courses 2-miles in length, although there may be events that include a 5K Middle School race.

### Varsity – Ages 14-17 (Grades 9-12)

Athletes in the Varsity division will typically compete on courses 5K in length, although there may be events that include a 2-mile Varsity race.

See current schedule and individual meet information for details.

**Important Dates:**

First Possible Practice: June 1  
First Possible Meet: August 1  
Rosters Due: September 1  
Championship Meet: Usually the last week of October

**Practices:**

Coaches will call practice when and where they feel practice is necessary and will run practices in the manner they feel necessary. Practice typically begins at the beginning of June and continues until the last meet, which is typically October or beginning of November.

Practices will typically be held on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The Program will not conduct official practices on Wednesday allowing families to attend various church gatherings often held on Wednesday.

Although practices will not be held on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, running on some of these days may be required to develop sufficient conditioning to compete at a high level. Coaches will recommend workouts for non-practice days during regularly scheduled practices.

Church services and activities are a vital part of the culture of our families. Athletes who miss practice due to church related services or activities will not be penalized for their absence.

Although no penalties are assessed for missing practice, absence from a significant amount of practice may affect competition due to a decline in conditioning.

Sick or injured athletes will be under the direct supervision of their parents who will advise coaches of their ability and limitations concerning practice and competition.

**Coaches:**

All coaches are volunteers and freely donate their time and efforts to coach your children. They are not paid nor do they receive any program discounts for their service. Please respect their efforts.

The Head Coach is responsible for:

- Determining practice dates, times and locations as deemed necessary;
- Developing athlete skills and abilities;
- Organizing and submitting the team roster to MSAHA officials;
- Creating team competition schedules; and
- Establishing and implementing program strategy.

The Program may include an assistant coach as necessary to help manage the team's needs.

The Assistant Coach is responsible for:

- Assisting the Head Coach during practices and meets;
- Supervising practices and meets, when required, in the event that the Head Coach is unavailable. The Head Coach will meet with the Assistant Coach prior to the scheduled absence, and will provide clear directions/guidance for executing the practice/meet;
- Developing athlete skills and abilities; and
- Implementing program strategy.

All coaches must be vetted and approved by the committee before being allowed to coach. All coaches must consent to a background check before final approval.

### **Injuries and/or Medical Emergencies:**

Coaches will do everything feasible to provide emergency care if an injury occurs during practice or competition. However, volunteer coaches are not emergency medical professionals. Injuries requiring medical attention will be the responsibility of the parents and their chosen physicians.

In recent years, concussions have become a more prevalent concern. The Program will treat all significant head injuries with utmost gravity. If concussion is a concern, athletes will be removed from practice or competition immediately. If an athlete receives a significant injury of any kind (including possible concussion) or develops a condition that requires medical attention, the athlete must present a signed medical release to the coach from their physician to return to practice or competition.

## **Cost and Fees:**

The Program strives to keep the cost of participation as low as possible. Fees collected are specifically to cover a current or projected cost (e.g., Insurance, Uniforms, Event Registration).

Cost and fees will vary year to year. A deadline for fees to be paid will be set at registration each year. If an individual's fees are not paid by the deadline, that athlete will not be allowed to participate and uniforms will not be ordered unless a previous arrangement has been confirmed with the Committee.

In addition to registration fees, there will be parking fees at most events. Some events provide an opportunity to purchase "Event" T-Shirts.

Registration fees for the 2025 season are as follows:

- \$17.00 per uniform tank (if needed).

The Program uses the same uniform as Knighthawks Track & Field in an effort to minimize cost. If an athlete has a Knighthawks tank (top) from the most recent Track & Field season, it may be worn in lieu of ordering a new uniform. Shorts (bottoms) shall be solid black and be provided by the athlete (uniform order includes tank only).

- \$100.00 registration per middle school or varsity athlete.
  - \$95.00 registration – second athlete
  - \$90.00 registration – third athlete
- \$60.00 registration per elementary school athlete.

Sports specific insurance and MSAHA membership dues are required to participate in the Program. The insurance and membership are non-declinable and will be purchased through initial registration fees.

## **Sports Physicals:**

Each participant in the Program is required to have a sports physical on file for that current year. Sports physicals are valid for a 12 month period from date of issue. Sports physicals may be obtained at many local General Practitioner Doctor's Offices. Many in the area will provide them for free.



## **Other Sports:**

The Program encourages participation in the ever-growing venue of homeschool sports and recognizes the fact that from time to time, conflicts will arise between sports schedules. However, the current “in-season” sport should take precedence. In cases of conflict between concurrent sports seasons, meets should take precedence over practices. Athletes should communicate clearly with their coaches to work out schedule conflicts and make up requirements for missed practices. Coaches are encouraged to reach out to other sports coaches and coordinate schedules when possible.

## **Code of Conduct:**

Laurel Knighthawks Cross-Country is unapologetically a Christian organization. As such, administration, coaches, athletes, volunteers and parents are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is Christ honoring. In keeping with this standard, all members will observe the following while acting on behalf of or while representing the Knighthawks Program in any capacity.

1. Dress and appearance should be modest. This includes practice apparel for all participants.
2. Personal conduct should be Christ honoring and above reproach.
  - Language should be graceful and edifying. No foul language will be tolerated.
  - Personal interaction with others should be pleasant and constructive. Bullying, hurtful taunting and harsh criticism will not be tolerated.
  - Use of alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes or vape(ing) is not permitted during Program events.
  - Sexual misconduct of any form will not be tolerated.
3. Media should be wholesome and of a manner that is in keeping with Christian principles.
  - Crude or vulgar music, text or images in print or electronic form will not be tolerated.
  - Any social media representing or depicting Knighthawks Cross-Country or its members should be such that it represents the program in a positive manner.

#### 4. Competition Environment

- While good natured cheers are part of an exciting competition environment, coaches and athletes from either team are not to be heckled or taunted in a hurtful manner.
- Coaches, athletes and fans are expected to treat judges and timing officials with respect. Arguing with and/or insulting officials in any form is not permitted.
- During meets, Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Team Captains are the only representatives delegated to communicate on behalf of the team. Runners, fans and other assistants should not directly engage or “Talk At” a race official.

Violation of this code of conduct is grounds for suspension or dismissal of athletes from the Program. Parents and fans found to be in violation may be asked to leave competitions without refund. Subsequent violations may result in parents or fans being barred from attending Knighthawks events.

#### **Program Policies:**

These policies are implemented to protect athletes, coaches and fans from injury, to protect the Knighthawks Cross-Country Program and partner facilities from liability for avoidable accidents, and to protect partner facility properties from any preventable damage. These policies shall be observed in our practice facilities and all competition venues.

1. Speaking in an official capacity on behalf of Knighthawks Cross-Country to any facility owner/operator, school official, program administrator, opposing team coach, player or fan are exclusive responsibilities of Knighthawks Cross-Country Coaches and Committee members. Membership within the program does not grant the right to speak on behalf of the program, raise complaints on behalf of the program or to enter agreements on behalf of the program.
2. Parking should be in designated parking areas only.
3. In the event of personal injury or damage done to a facility or facility campus, home or away, due to a violation of these policies, Knighthawks Cross-Country will not accept liability for repair, replacement or costs of

damages. The individual member family responsible for the violation will be personally responsible for any necessary repair, reimbursement or restitution.

4. Failure to abide by these policies may result in suspension or dismissal from the program. If dismissed for failing to abide by these policies, no fees will be refunded and no previously published media will be retracted or revised.

### **Disciplinary Policy:**

The Program recognizes the authority and autonomy of individual families that comprise its membership. Matters of personal or individual discipline will at all times be referred to the parents of those involved. The only disciplinary actions imposed by the Program will be suspension or dismissal of an athlete or member family for a code of conduct violation.

If problems arise between individuals or member families, those families should seek resolution and reconciliation among themselves. Committee members and coaches should not be asked to involve themselves in interpersonal issues.

If problems arise between members and coaches or if a complaint needs to be raised against a coach, the Program committee will be tasked with mediating and resolving such conflicts.

If a code of conduct violation occurs, the committee reserves the right to investigate the violation and to suspend or dismiss members. If dismissed for a code of conduct violation, no fees will be refunded and no previously published media will be retracted or revised.

### **Acceptance of Stated Policies**

Prior to final enrollment into the Program, potential members will be provided access to a copy of the handbook for the current sports year. Furthermore, each member enrolling will be asked to sign, on their enrollment form, a statement that they have read and agree to the terms and policies set forth within this handbook. Enrollment in the Program is an affirmation of the members understanding of and agreement to abide by the policies set forth within this handbook.