

PONTE VEDRA CROSS COUNTRY HANDBOOK (2026)

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Introduction

The Ponte Vedra High School (PVHS) Cross Country Team is a varsity athletic organization. The skill level of the student-athletes currently range from All-State honorees to beginner athletes who simply love the sport and want to participate. The success of the individual athlete and team is built on each individual's willingness to work hard and learn as one united team. Student-athletes of all skill levels are encouraged to join and will all be held to the same standards.

Mission

The primary goal of the coaching staff is the formation of young men and women of strong moral character through the challenges, discipline, and teamwork inherent in athletic competition.

Core Values

It is far more important that student-athletes are known for their respect, sportsmanship, diligence, integrity, teamwork, honor, and work ethic than any of their athletic achievements. Each student-athlete represents the team in the classroom, on the XC course, and in the community. The coaching staff expects that all student-athletes will act in a manner that honors their team, feeling the joy of their teammates' success and being mindful of the space we all share. Throughout the process have fun. Take more from the XC experience than just being an athlete, and give back more than you take.

Team Expectations

Those who do not comply with the SJCS and FHSAA rules as outlined in the Student-Athlete Code of Conduct and Pursuing Victory with Honor contracts will be disciplined at the discretion of the coach and the school administration. Depending upon the severity of the infraction(s), disciplinary action may range from single or multi-day suspension from team activities (i.e., practices, meets, team functions) to dismissal from the team. Any athlete dismissed from the team will not receive letter, participation or other post-season recognition.

Eligibility

In order to maintain eligibility, student-athlete must meet all of the following conditions:

- Be either enrolled in PVHS or zoned for PVHS.
- Have a cumulative 2.0 GPA average on a 4.0 unweighted scale.
- Document their age with the school and it cannot exceed 19 years and 9 months.
- Not exceed the 4-year eligibility limit.
- Have all paperwork approved by the Athletic Director's office before participating in practice.

Letter Requirements

A varsity letter is not given, it is earned. To receive a varsity letter, a student-athlete must earn 40 points.

Athletic clearance completed by the 1st official day of the season	5 pts
Return all issued uniforms within one week of your season ending	5 pts
Make the post season roster	10 pts

Race a 5K time at or less than 17:30 for boys and 20:45 for girls.	10 pts
Win a Varsity Race	10 pts
Win a JV race	5 pts
Race at the State Meet	10 pts
Extraordinary contribution to PVXC or achievement as determined by coaching staff	10 pts
Zero unexcused absences all season	10 pts

Special consideration will be given to seniors who have participated for 3-4 years and demonstrate leadership but who do not otherwise attain a varsity letter.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken every day. All student-athletes are expected to attend every practice, meet, and team event. Please keep this in mind when planning family events and trips. Please arrive to practice and meets at least 10 minutes early so that we can start on time...our time together is valuable and limited.

Excused Tardiness/Absence

To be considered “excused” all absences must be submitted via SportsYou, text or email to a head coach prior to the start of practice. Verification from a parent or guardian may be requested. Messages received after the start of practice will not be accepted. Tardies and absences related to school are automatically excused with proper notification. Furthermore, any practice time missed for medical reasons will also automatically be excused with proper notification. The head coach will decide if a monthly attendance report is to be presented to the parents/guardians.

Unexcused Tardiness/Absence

A student-athlete who does not practice consistent and punctual attendance will face consequences. The number of infractions will correlate to the disciplinary action taken (see below).

Unexcused Tardiness:

- 1st and 2nd offenses: Student-athlete will receive a verbal warning.
- 3rd and 4th offenses: Student-athlete will receive another verbal warning and parents will be notified.
- 5 or more offenses: Parents will be notified and student-athlete will not be allowed to compete in the next meet.

Unexcused Absence:

- 1st offense: Parents will be notified.
- 2nd offense: Parents and athletic director will be notified that this is the final warning. The student-athlete will not be allowed to compete in the next meet.
- 3rd offense: Parents and athletic director will be notified and student-athlete will be dismissed from the team.

Practices

Practice is at the school Monday thru Friday. Practices are typically before school Monday through Friday beginning at 6:30am. Any practice schedule changes will be communicated as soon as possible.

Student-athletes are required to run the prescribed course/route with the whole team and are not permitted to explore or run on their own. Absolutely no one should enter the Del Webb community behind the school or in the area known as “Africa” (fenced and protected Federal property west of Davis Park, south of Nocatee Pkwy, and east of Cross Water). Any student-athlete who violates and enters either Del Webb or “Africa” will be dismissed from the team immediately. In addition, students should remain on sidewalks where possible, cross streets at crosswalks, and generally obey traffic commands. Lack of adherence to these guidelines will result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the team. The safety of each athlete is the primary concern, so earbuds are never acceptable in any practice or meet.

Pre-Season Conditioning

Pre-season conditioning is optional but a good way to give yourself a jump-start on the season. Times and dates are posted to the TeamTopia website, SportsYou and the XC Instagram account pvsharksxc.

Practicing on Your Own

If you are not able to make a scheduled practice for excused/unexcused absences, you must coordinate with your coach to arrange for an alternate workout plan to get the training in on your own. You will be held accountable to that plan to remain in good standing on the team. Similarly, you may be asked to workout on your own over the weekend/holiday/spring break/etc or as need arises.

Meets

Please keep in mind that athletically our main goal is to perform at our best for the championship meets (JV Champs, District, Region, and State) at the end of the season. Regular season meets are a vehicle for us to measure ourselves against competition and foster improvement but are not our main focus. We may ask our student-athletes to do more/less/different events than they will at the championship meets in an effort to get them ready and/or keep them fresh for the championship season. While it would be great to win individual or team honors at a regular season meet, we will not do so to the detriment of our student-athletes chances for long-term success at the championship meets.

School Attendance

Student-athletes who are absent (unexcused) from school on the day of a weekday meet or on Friday for a Saturday meet may not compete.

FHSAA Championship Meets

These meets are at the end of season (starting in mid-October and lasting through early-November) and offer a progressive and systematic approach to determining the best teams and individuals in the State. Qualification for these meets is as follows:

- Participation in the District Meet is solely up to the discretion of the coaches. We are limited to 7-10 athletes per gender based on the District's direction. Not all student-athletes will participate.
- Top 7 - 10 individuals at District Meet earn All-District accolades.
- Top 30 individuals and top 10 teams at District Meet advance to Region Meet.
- Top 10 finishers at Region Meet in each event earn All-Region accolades.
- Top 15 individuals and top 6 teams at Region Meet advance to State Meet.
- Top 15 finishers at State Meet earn All-State accolades.

Transportation

The team will provide busing (or other transportation) to each non-home meet we attend. Coaches have a responsibility to make sure that all student-athletes are accounted for while at a meet representing the school. In order to facilitate that accounting, the following school/county/team rules are in place:

- Do not be late for the bus or you may be left behind.
- For meets that fall on a school day, student-athletes must travel by bus (or other team vehicle) to the meet and return on the bus.
- For meets that fall on a non-school day, student-athletes will travel by bus or with their parent/guardian only.
- Student-athletes who want to leave a Saturday meet (with their parent/guardian only) before the bus leaves must communicate this to one of the coaches. At the meet, a coach must also see the parent and receive verbal confirmation from the parent that they are taking their student-athlete from the meet before they can leave.
- Unexcused absence from the team bus for the trip home may result in a multi-meet suspension.
- In no circumstances can a student-athlete drive themselves or their teammates to or from a meet.
- In no circumstances can a student-athlete ride with another teammate's parent or guardian to or from a meet.

Required Equipment

All athletes will be responsible for bringing the following to each meet/practice:

- Proper running clothes
- Shoes
- Dry clothes for after workout/race
- Water bottle
- Watch (we prefer each athlete have a GPS enable watch for XC, preferably Garmin)
- Team Shirt (meets only)
- Uniform (meets only)
- Long pants and sweatshirts/hoodies late in the season

Wellness

Cross Country is a physically demanding sport where injuries are not uncommon but oftentimes preventable. Student-athletes break down their bodies every time they workout and rely on proper recovery and refueling to come back stronger the next time. Coaches will do their best to prepare student-

athletes for the physical rigors they will face but much of the recovery process is in the hands of the student-athletes. It is normal to be a little sore and tired at times but please let your coaches know if these symptoms persist, become cause for concern, or are otherwise hampering your performance.

Shoes

Everyone's running form (and feet) are unique. Properly fitted shoes are of the utmost importance to helping our student-athletes stay injury free. Specialty running stores offer a fitting service not found in large chain athletic stores or online. Having the right fit ensures you are in the right type of running shoes for your individual needs. Improperly fitted shoes can lead to undue stress on the body and injuries. 1st Place Sports (www.1stPlaceSports.com) is a local specialty running store that offers this service. They are also a sponsor of PVHS Athletics and offer a 10% discount to all our athletes.

Running shoes wear down after time and miles and need to be replaced periodically to ensure you are getting the proper benefits from the shoe. Here are a couple rules of thumb on shoe buying:

- Distance runners need to replace training shoes every 2-4 months or 300-400 miles.
- Choose shoes based on fit, feel, and comfort rather than how they look or if they match your outfit.
- Alternating shoes helps them last up to 50% longer than running in the same shoes every day. A good example of this would be wearing your newest pair of shoes on longer days and harder workouts and then a (slightly) older pair on easy days.
- If possible, only wear your running shoes when actually running. Wearing them outside of practice will wear them down much quicker. You're worn athletic shoes are a much better choice.

Hydration

Student-athletes need to drink plenty of water. Living in Florida there is no way around it. It is recommended that all student-athletes drink at least six to eight 16oz. bottles of water each day. This amount is double the average person. Gatorade is great for after workouts, but water is better before and during workouts. Bring a water bottle to school and practice every day. Caffeine is a diuretic, which means it actually pulls water out of your system. When we drink a 12 oz Coke, we have to drink 24oz of water to get to our desirable level of hydration. Caffeine and carbonation should not be consumed by serious athletes.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential for student-athletes to compete at their best. It gives us the energy to perform, the building blocks to recover and grow stronger after workouts, and finally it strengthens our immune system so that we can be healthy enough to do it again the next day. There is a wealth of information on nutrition online and many of it is conflicting. In general, balance and moderation are key but here are a few sample guidelines:

- A good target for your calorie intake is 60-65% carbohydrates, 15-20% protein, and 20-25% fat.
- Nutrients like calcium (for bone strength), iron (for oxygen transport), sodium/electrolytes (facilitating

hydration), and antioxidants like vitamins A, C, E (for preventing cell damage caused by free radicals) are especially important for runners.

- Try to eat within 20 minutes of a workout (post cool down and stretching) to maximize nutrient absorption. This means you may need to plan ahead and bring a snack with you to practice and meets.
- There is very little nutritional value in junk food. If it is a necessary part of your diet, practice moderation.

Sleep

Research shows that high school students on average don't get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can affect performance, concentration, and general health of the student. During sleep, your body does its heavy lifting with regards to muscle repair and growth – this is when recovery happens. We've all heard the rule of thumb that 8 hours of sleep is necessary for the average person. You are not an average person - you are an athlete. Try to incorporate as much sleep as possible into your daily routine. Consistency is important. Sleeping in on the weekends can't make up for a consistent lack of sleep. Similarly, don't worry if you have pre-race jitters the night before a race and can't sleep. One night of bad sleep won't slow you down much if you get consistent sleep throughout the week.

Parents/Guardians

Coaches expect a personal, yet businesslike, approach in their relationship with parents/guardians. The coaches will answer all questions and listen to concerns before or after their coaching duties have ended at practice. Coaches can be reached via email or the team app SportsYou. A few things for parents/guardians to consider:

- Coaches will have final say in determining which student-athletes are on varsity/JV. Please, respect the coach's decision and allow your student-athlete(s) to work out any issues privately with them.
- Please, do not interrupt the coaches while they are coaching student-athletes.
- Parents/guardians must acknowledge that their student-athlete may be disciplined, or removed, from the team if he/she violates any of the rules outlined in this handbook, the FHSAA handbook, or the St. Johns County Student-Athlete Code of Conduct "Pursuing Victory with Honor" contract. Since parents/guardians can be held responsible for the actions of their student-athlete, it is important that they are aware of the rules and consequences if the rules are broken.
- On race day, parents/guardians are asked to limit access to the team tent. A separate parent tent will be provided and is often stocked with refreshments by parent-volunteers.

Communication

Information about the PVHS Cross Country Team can be found on our team website. Additionally, we are utilizing the communication app SportsYou. We encourage every family to visit the website and install the app for updates and general information. Additionally, team members and their parents/guardians will be asked to sign up for email alerts as part of the registration process. We will

make every effort to share information about practice, meets, etc. in a timely manner. Please keep in mind that we are often at the mercy of weather and other inconveniences.

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