

2016 DGS Girls Cross Country Team Handbook

Team Website: www.dgscctf.com

Team Twitter: @DGSCC

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Text 'Follow DGSCC' to 40404 to automatically receive text updates on girls cross country

Practice Schedule

Practices will be held Monday thru Saturday throughout the season. Most practices will last between 90 minutes and 2 hours. Ending times for all practices are approximate. Some may be a few minutes longer, some will be completed sooner.

All athletes are expected to be in attendance at ALL practices at the noted start time for each practice.

Week 1

Aug. 10: 7:00-9:30 am
Aug. 11-13: Team Camping Trip (depart 7:00 am Thu, return 12:00 noon Sat)

Week 2

Aug. 15: 7:00-9:30 am
Aug. 16: 7:00-9:30 am, Parent Meeting at cafetorium at 7:00 pm
Aug. 17: 7:00-9:30 am, Picture Day at stadium at 9:40 am
Aug. 18-20: 7:00-9:30 am

Week 3

Aug. 22: Varsity practice at 7:00 am, All: Meet at Yorkville (2:15 pm bus)
Aug. 23-24: 7:00-9:30 am
Aug. 25-26: 3:30-5:45pm
Aug. 27: 8:00-10:30 am

Weeks 4-10

Aug. 29-Oct.15: 3:30-5:45pm
(most Saturday or Holiday practices will be 8:00-10:30 am)

Weeks 11-13 (Varsity Top 10-12 only)

Oct. 17-Nov. 4: 3:30-5:45 pm

Complete CC Practice Calendar can also be found on team website (www.dgscctf.com)

Meet Schedule

Everyone on the team may participate in all meets up to and including the conference championship meet on Oct. 15. Freshmen and sophomores may compete in FS, JV, Open or sometimes Varsity levels. Juniors and seniors may compete in JV, Open, or Varsity levels. For some of the Monday meets, the top varsity group may practice instead of competing in the meet. All HOME meets are in **Bold**.

Date	Day	Meet/Teams	Levels	Place	Time
Aug.22	Mon	Yorkville Invite	JV-Var	Hoover Outdoor Ed	4:30pm
Aug.29	Mon	Addison Trail	FS-JV-Var	O'Brien Park	4:30pm
Sept.3	Sat	Fenton Invite	Open-JV-Var	Fenton HS	9:00am
Sept.7	Wed	Willowbrook/Leyden	FS-JV-Var	Center Point Park	4:30pm
Sept.10	Sat	Peoria 'FTTF' Invite	Open-Var	Detweiller Park	11:40am
Sept.17	Sat	Minooka Flight Meet	FS-JV-Var	Channahon Park	9:00am
Sept.20	Tue	Proviso East/Hinsdale So	FS-JV-Var	KLM Park	4:30pm
Sept.23	Fri	Naperville Invite	FS-JV-Var	River Woods SC	4:30pm
Oct.1	Sat	Niles West Invite	FS-JV	Niles West HS	9:00am
Oct.1	Sat	Peoria Central Invite	Varsity	Detweiller Park	11:00am
Oct.3	Mon	Morton	FS-JV-Var	O'Brien Park	4:30pm
Oct.8	Sat	West Aurora Invite	FS-JV-Var	Stuart Sports Complex	9:00am
Oct.15	Sat	WSC Championship	FS-JV-Var	KLM Park	TBA

IHSA State Series

After the conference meet, we will designate 10-12 athletes who will continue into the IHSA state series. Seven of those athletes will compete and the remaining 3-5 will serve as alternates.

Date	Day	Meet	Level	Place	Time
Oct.22	Sat	IHSA Regional	Varsity	KLM Park	TBA
Oct.29	Sat	IHSA Sectional	Varsity	Midlothian Meadows	TBA
Nov.5	Sat	IHSA State	Varsity	Detweiller Park	TBA

Athlete Requirements

There are no cuts and no requirements to run a certain time, but there are **2 specific expectations** that need to be met to remain a part of the DGS Girls Cross Country team.

1. Be at EVERY practice and be ON-TIME. We will not cancel practices because of the weather. Try to schedule outside conflicts around our practice schedule and if an absence is unavoidable, communicate it AHEAD of time with one of the coaches. One unexcused absence is a *warning*, the 2nd is *suspension* from the next meet, the 3rd is *dismissal* from the team. The coaches will determine if an absence is excused. **Work conflicts are NOT excused.**
2. Distance running is difficult. Training for distance running is even more difficult. Practices WILL be hard. Do not waste your time and effort if this is something you don't want to do. RESPECT the sport and all those that are competing in it by putting in 100% effort ALL of the time.

Things you NEED: You will need a good pair of training flats (running shoes) to use in practice each day. You will also need a pair of distance running spikes (1/4 or 3/8 inch spikes in the shoes) to use for meets. **You need a watch that has a stopwatch function to use in practice each day. It does not need to be fancy or have other functions; the most basic \$10-15 watch from Wal-Mart will work.** Running shorts and a t-shirt will be needed for practice each day. You will need a combination padlock for your locker. Later in the Fall, when the weather is colder, you will need cold weather clothing (hat, gloves, sweatpants, sweatshirt, etc). Pay attention to the weather and dress accordingly.

Lockers: We are assigned the girls locker room off of the small gymnasium. You must provide your own lock. Please lock up all of your possessions (especially your uniform, shoes & spikes) at ALL times. We share this locker room with other sports teams and things left out WILL unfortunately get stolen.

Uniforms: You will be provided with a Downers Grove South uniform top and shorts, and a vinyl warm-up jacket and pants. These items will be numbered. You are expected to take care of this clothing. Please wash all of these items in COLD water and HANG them to dry rather than using the dryer. You should remember your numbers and return all clothing in good shape at the end of the season. There will be one day after school at the end of the season dedicated to uniform turn-in. If you do not turn in your assigned uniform, you will be charged to replace it. The warm-ups are brand new, custom made and cost nearly \$100 each to replace.

Team/Individual Pictures: Wednesday, August 17th is Picture Day. We are scheduled to take pictures at 9:40am. We will practice 7:00-9:30am that day. The girls should meet at 9:40am in the stadium. Anyone wishing to purchase team or individual photos must turn in a completed picture form and money on that day.

Meet the Team: Tuesday, Aug. 16th from 7:00 – 8:00pm in the DGS cafetorium. This meeting is for ALL athletes and parents to hear from the coaches about their expectations of athletes and team. The Dick Pond Shoemobile will also be set up at 6:30 and information about the DGS Running Boosters will be presented.

Athletic Code Meeting: The presentation will be online. Each athlete and parent will need to view.

Safety Checklist

Rules for running *safely* in and around Downers Grove

- Always try to run with at least one other team member.
- Pay attention when crossing all intersections, especially those without a stop light.
- Always assume that the driver of a car cannot see you.
- If a situation appears dangerous, get off the road immediately.
- If you get LOST during the route, return immediately to DGS. You may run campus or Bolson loops to make up mileage.
- If you see or hear lightning and you are close to DGS, return to the school immediately. If you cannot do that, take shelter indoors, wait out the weather, or call my cell (630-269-2884) to be picked up.
- Shelter for lightning will be the hallway outside the small gym girl's locker room.
- Shelter for tornadoes will be the basement weight room area.

Hot Weather Issues

Heat Cramps

- Symptoms: muscles spasms or cramps, usually in the calf or abdomen
- Treatment: stop running, drink water or water diluted Gatorade, stretch easily
- Prevention: eat a balanced high potassium diet

Dehydration

- Symptoms: fatigue, lethargy, irritability, coordination problems, and faintness
- Treatment: stop running, drink water or water diluted Gatorade
- Prevention: drink before and during exercise

Heat Exhaustion

- Symptoms: dehydration, goose bumps, headache, nausea, and vomiting
- Treatment: move to cool, shaded area, elevate feet, apply cold water/ice to cool down immediately, hydrate with cool fluids, seek medical aid.
- Prevention: drink before and during exercise, wear clothing that breathes

Heat Stroke (Medical Emergency...80% fatal unless treated)

- Symptoms: unsteady gait, confusion, combative behavior, reduced consciousness, coma
- Treatment: move to cool, shaded area, elevate feet, apply cold water and fan to increase evaporation, apply ice over major vessels n neck, groin, and other exposed areas, rehydrate, and evacuate to medical facility.
- Prevention: drink before and during exercise, wear clothing that breathes

Cold Weather Issues

- Keep gloves, stocking cap, and a sweat shirt in your assigned locker at ALL times of the season.
- Wear outer garments that help keep out the wind such as vinyl or gortex.
- You need to hydrate just as often as you do in hot weather.

Athlete FAQ

Who is Our Competition? Above anything else, **our main competition is ourselves.** We cannot control who we run against or how good they are. We cannot play defense. All we can do is run our best (in practice and in meets) and work on getting better. Our number one team goal is to have every athlete improve upon their times throughout the course of the season.

What are Invationals? All of our weekend meets (mostly Saturdays) are considered Invitational Meets. Those meets typically are against anywhere from 10 to 40 other schools. Competition in most of these meets is very tough and finishing in the upper 20% is a good accomplishment. One goal we have as a team is to place high and bring home as many team trophies/plaques as we can from these meets.

What is Conference? Downers Grove South competes in the West Suburban Gold Conference. It is made up of 7 schools (Addison Trail, Hinsdale South, Leyden, Morton, Proviso East, Willowbrook and DGS). We compete against 1 or 2 of these schools in each our Monday meets. The conference championship is determined from the WSC Gold Championship meet when all 7 schools compete together. One of our team goals is to win the overall conference championship on each level (Varsity, Jr.Varsity, Sophomore, Freshman) in the middle of October. ***Currently we have won 17 straight conference titles!***

What is the State Series? The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) State competition is a 3-week series that begins in the end of October, the week after the conference championship. Only our top 7 runners compete in the IHSA State series. We will also have 3-5 alternates who continue to practice. The first week is the IHSA Regional (top 6 teams out of 10 teams qualify on...and top 5 individuals not from those top 6 teams qualify on). The second week is the IHSA Sectional (top 5 teams out of 20 qualify on...and top 7 individuals not from those top 5 teams qualify on). The third week is the IHSA State Meet in Peoria. A total of 25 teams and 210 runners will compete. The top 25 individuals earn All-State honors. Our goal is to qualify the entire team for the State Meet each season. The state is divided into 3 classes according to school enrollment size. We will be competing at the Class AAA level against the largest 33% of all schools in Illinois.

Who are the State Series Runners? Prior to the State Series, we declare a list of 12 athletes eligible to run. We are only allowed 7 girls in each race, but we can have up to 5 alternates who may replace any of the 7 runners in any of the 3 meets (regionals, sectionals, state). If one or more of the athletes are injured or struggling, it's not uncommon to replace them with an alternate. As we progress through the state series and qualify for state, we may not take all of the alternates with us to state. We generally do not take senior alternates unless there is a likely chance they will compete. We prefer to take a younger athlete who might end up competing at state in the future.

Parent Information

What is Cross Country? Cross Country is a team running sport that takes place in the fall on a measured 3-mile loop over varied surfaces and terrain. While our home course is at O'Brien Park near DGS, many Cross Country meets are held on dirt trails, park grounds, and sometimes at school campuses. The DGS team is usually made up of anywhere from 30 to 60 girls. Our top 7-12 runners are considered the Varsity team. We also compete in Jr.Varsity/Open and Freshman/Sophomore competitions at every meet. Everyone on the team participates at EVERY meet on our schedule. No one sits on the bench!

How Cross Country is scored? A Cross Country meet is scored by each team adding up the places of its top 5 finishers. As in golf, the low score wins. For example, a team that scores 26 points places ahead of a team that scores 29 points, as follows:

DGS: 1-4-5-6-10: 26 points (DGS Wins!)

WB: 2-3-7-8-9: 29 points

A team's 6th and 7th place finishers can also figure in the scoring if they place ahead of other teams' top 5 finishers. When that is the case, they become "pushers" by pushing up their opponents' scores as follows:

DGS: 2-3-7-8-9 (10) (11): 27 points (DGS Wins!)

WB: 1-4-5-7-12: 29 points

Only a team's 6th and 7th place finishers can be pushers, regardless of how many of its runners may finish ahead of an opposing team's top 5 finishers. A perfect dual meet score (15-50) occurs when one team places their entire top 7 runners ahead of any of the other team's runners.

What does my daughter NEED for Cross Country? Each girl will need a good pair of **training flats** (running shoes) to use in practice each day. She will also need a pair of distance running **spikes** (1/4 or 3/8 inch spikes in the shoes) to use for meets. Each girl needs a **watch** that has a stopwatch function to use in practice each day. It does not need to be fancy or have other functions; the most basic \$10-15 watch from Wal-Mart will work. Everyone will need a combination **padlock** for their locker.

How do I buy running shoes? If possible, go to a store that deals primarily with running footwear and apparel. These stores have experienced runners as sales persons who can help you choose the right shoe with the right fit for your daughter. One local store that we recommend is [Dick Pond Shoes](#) on Maple Ave. in Lisle. Another one is the Naperville Running Company in downtown Naperville. There is no getting around the fact that running shoes are expensive. The best way to prolong the life and function of a new pair of running shoes is to wear them for running only, not as school dress or for P.E. class.

Does my daughter need spikes? YES! Spikes are as important on race day as the running shoes are during practice. They give better traction on courses where footing is not always so sure. If your daughter is planning on competing in cross country, indoor track & outdoor track, there are spikes that work well for all three sports/surfaces combined. If you purchase them from a store that deals primarily with running footwear, they will be able to point you in the right direction. In any case, make sure you ask for distance running spikes. You want to AVOID getting “sprinter” spikes...shoes with a hard plastic front part of the sole that forces you to run on your toes.

What about uniforms? Your daughter will be provided with a Downers Grove South uniform top and shorts, and a vinyl warm-up jacket and pants. These items will be numbered. She is expected to take care of this clothing. Please wash all of these items in COLD water and HANG them to dry rather than using the dryer. Encourage your daughter to remember her numbers (in the last moments before a race, it is easy to get warm-ups mixed up with other girls). She needs to return all clothing in good shape at the end of the season. There will be one day after school at the end of the season dedicated to uniform turn-in. If your daughter does not turn in her assigned uniform, she will be charged to replace it. The warm-ups are custom made and cost nearly \$100 each to replace.

Picture Day? Our team is scheduled to take team and individual pictures on Wed., August 19th at 9:40am. The girls will have a normal practice at 7:00am before the picture taking and should wear practice clothes and bring their uniform to change into. The girls should meet in the stadium at 9:40am. Picture forms will be passed out a few days before and must be returned along with payment for any pictures ordered on that Wed. morning. Uniform top and shorts need to be worn (no sweats).

How can I help the team? Be a Parent Booster! The Downers Grove South Running Boosters is an organization of parents that provide support to 4 different sports teams at DGS: Girls Cross Country, Boys Cross Country, Girls Track & Field and Boys Track & Field. They help purchase equipment and uniforms for our programs that the athletic department is unable to. They also help out at all home meets in various capacities: helping at the finish chute, timing, working at the concession stand, etc. As the parent of a runner, you are invited to participate in Running Boosters. More information regarding the Running Boosters will be provided at the Meet the Team night on Tue., August 16 at 7:00pm.

Awards Night? The Awards night will be held in November (exact date is TBA, but it's usually the week after State) at the Hyatt Lodge on the McDonald's campus in Oak Brook. The address is 2815 Jorie Blvd. It consists of a sit down dinner followed by the awards presentations. There is a cost of approximately \$20 per person (including your athlete) to attend. We want EVERY athlete to attend. The Running Boosters will cover the cost of the banquet for any athlete who might not be able to attend because the cost is prohibitive.

Iron Testing. Please read and carefully consider the later section on Iron Testing.

A Few Points about the Beginning of the Season

During the first couple weeks of training, there are a few areas that may be of concern to you as a parent. Is there anything you can do to help? What can you expect? How can you help prepare your daughter for training, competition, and the everyday rigors of life combined with cross country?

First, as a general rule, don't change your daughter's normal daily routine. Everything should remain the same in terms of responsibilities, appropriate eating, sleeping, and social habits.

Second, be aware that a common result of training (especially early on) is muscle soreness. If she doesn't have a long background in running, this muscle soreness may last as long as a couple weeks at the beginning of the training. It is best that she let her coaches know about this so that we can adjust her workout to get a faster recovery. Also, as with any sport, there is the risk of a sports related injury. All concerns regarding these should be directed to the coaches, our trainer, or a physician.

Finally, a well-balanced diet is going to help any athlete in her performance (see Iron Testing section). Any changes that you might want to implement should be gradual. On competition days, high fat, fried foods, sodas, and highly acidic drinks should be avoided. Distance runners should be drinking about 8 glasses of water per day and on days that are especially hot and humid, even more. We recommend eating a diet that is high in carbohydrates, which is excellent fuel for a cross country runner. We understand that everybody's dietary needs are different, but it is usually better to go into a race on the hungry side (the opposite can lead to cramping).

Attendance

Practices are after school every day and on Saturdays. Your daughter is expected to be dressed and ready for practice at 3:37pm each day after school. Practice usually ends between 5:30-6:00pm. Saturday practices will be early in the morning. All girls on the team are expected to be at every practice, workout and meet.

We ask that if your daughter needs to make a doctor or dental appointment, if possible, try to schedule it near the end of practice. If that is not possible, please let us know ahead of time so that we can give her an alternate workout for her to do on her own.

Please refer to the **Athlete Requirements** section of this handbook regarding unexcused practices. An athlete who misses a practice unexcused will be given one warning. A second unexcused absence will cause her not to be allowed to participate in the following meet. A third unexcused absence will result in her removal from the team.

Communication

Please do not hesitate to contact a coach if you have any questions. Coach Plunkett will be putting together a parent email list in order to send out weekly information.

Watching a Cross Country Meet?

Cross Country is unique in that boys and girls often compete on the same course on the same day. Cross Country meets are usually organized around six races: Girls F/S, Boys F/S, Girls Varsity, Boys Varsity, Girls JV, Boys JV. The order of events varies from meet to meet. Check with your daughter before each meet so that you know the order and time frame for that meet. Each race lasts about 30 minutes. Regardless of when your daughter competes, your presence for as much of the entire meet as possible is appreciated. Support for all of the team's runners is important. Meets are a great place to get to know other parents, share experiences and information, and have a good time. The terrain of a cross country course varies considerably according to the site. Some are very hilly while others are relatively flat terrain. Runners frequently run off into the woods and don't reappear for more than five minutes or longer. While Cross Country may not be the most convenient spectator sport, the support you offer by your presence is valued and appreciated by all the runners and coaches.

Cross Country is not a sport observed from a stationary point. There are many ways for parents to enjoy watching a race. One way is to watch the start, move to another point along the course to cheer and watch as runners pass by, move to another spot on the course and finally try to make the finish area as runners complete the race. Familiarizing yourself with the course before the race begins will help determine the vantage points you can reach to watch and cheer. Ask parents who have been to the course for previous races where the best places are. Or, follow the crowds. A quick note of caution: it is against the rules to run alongside a runner and pace them. This will get your athlete disqualified from the race.

While the girls are warming up, do not be surprised if you are not getting the attention of your daughter. They are usually using the time before their race to familiarize themselves with the course, to get warmed up, and to get prepared to run with last minute instructions from their coaches.

Once a race is over, parents are often surprised (especially the first time) to see how tired their daughter is. These symptoms are normally weakness in the knees, stumbling in a fainting like manner, overall weakness, glossy eyes, and nausea. These symptoms generally pass quickly. A common mistake that parents make is to take their daughter and try to care for them. Please let us take care of them. We will normally bring coolers of Gatorade and water to each meet. It is good for them to drink Gatorade/water soon after finishing. This replaces the fluids and electrolytes that typically are lost during a race. After they are done racing, we require that they cool down as a team and cheer on their teammates that have yet to run.

Parents are often surprised at the change in attitude by their daughter as far as how serious they get about their race. This is something that team competition brings out in the athletes and, often, it is a mild shock to some parents.

Lastly, it is our team rule that athletes ride the bus both TO and FROM all meets.

Nutritional Information

Plan your diet. Devise a sensible eating plan that you can stick to which will suit the lifestyle of a high school athlete. Start by analyzing what you are eating now. Do you have breakfast? Do you feel tired and hungry when you run in the morning or by the time you run after school? If your diet is repetitive and boring you may not be getting the variety of foods necessary for adequate nutrient intake. **See Iron Testing section.**

Eat little and often. Frequent snacking throughout the day is a sure way to avoid low blood sugar levels and tiredness by the time you ready for your after school workout. Research shows that eating little and often is best for runners...as long as you are eating the right things! Make a point of taking high-carbohydrate snacks to school with you so that you aren't caught out of energy. Avoid high-fat snacks such as crisps and chocolate, opting instead for high-carb and low-fat snacks, which make the best fuel. Dry breakfast cereal, plain popcorn, bagels, low-fat crisp breads, bananas and other fruit are all excellent choices.

Don't ignore the main meals. Regular sensible snacking is important, but proper meals are where carbo-loading really counts. Pasta is deservedly the runner's favorite, but there are plenty of other excellent high-carb foods, such as rice, baked potatoes, lentils, muesli and even baked beans. Still, beware! Some high-carb foods are also high in fat. Lasagna, thin-crust pizza, croissants and granola are some of the worst culprits.

Supplement those supplements. Instead of spending a small fortune on pills and potions to supplement your diet, try to ensure that you get the vitamins and minerals you need from the food you eat. It's a big mistake to think that a supplement will completely satisfy your nutritional needs. Taking a pill might give you the recommended daily amount of a particular vitamin, but you also need protein, minerals, fiber and energy in the form of calories, which no pill will provide.

Drink more water. Water is the body's most important nutrient. It makes up between 50 and 60 percent of your body weight and provides the medium in which most of the body processes occur. Aim to drink throughout the day, with a pint of water (or a sports drink) an hour before you run, and half a pint for every 30 minutes of running. On days when you run you should aim to consume five liters during the day, twice as much as is necessary on rest days.

Don't forget your pre-race meal. You're well versed in the idea of carbo-loading, but there are still a few tricks of the trade that can help you race at your best. Firstly, don't overeat late the night before as this will make sleep harder to come by. Secondly, don't think of that final plate of pasta on the eve of the race as your last meal. Your body will use up some of that food energy overnight, so make sure you have breakfast. For example: bread or cereal, perhaps a banana and lots of water, but the carb combination is up to you. Just cut right down on fat and protein, which takes a long time to digest.

Don't try new things on race day. Don't try new foods or drinks before or on the day of the race. Your body may not tolerate it. If your body is not used to something you could risk having a lot of stomach problems or diarrhea during your race.

Carbo-load for recovery. Immediately after a race or hard workout it's important to refuel your body with high-carb food or drinks. The first four hours after strenuous exercise is a crucial time for taking on new glycogen to replace what you've lost while working hard. Recent research suggests that including around 25% protein in your recovery food will optimize the recovery of your muscles. **Endurox R4** is a recovery product that works wonders if taken soon enough after a hard workout (30-60 minutes).

Female Athlete Triad

- Disordered Eating
- Amenorrhea
- Osteoporosis

Disclaimer: No one on the cross country coaching staff is a doctor. The following information is based on books we have read, coaching clinics we have attended, presentations from our own athletic training staff, doctors, personal and coaching experiences. If any of the following conditions are suspected, we recommend seeking qualified medical attention.

Disordered Eating is a pattern of behavior, which manifests itself in several ways, all of which have an emphasis on excessive weight loss. If extreme and prolonged, it can lead to a severe eating disorder, such as anorexia nervosa (self-starvation) or bulimia nervosa (bingeing/purging). The disordered eating component of the triad can dramatically increase the incidence of the other two components of the triad, amenorrhea and osteoporosis.

Amenorrhea. Primary amenorrhea is the absence of menses by age 16. Secondary amenorrhea is defined as the absence of 3 to 12 consecutive menses. Amenorrhea in endurance runners is not simply the result of hard training, but rather indicative of something going wrong. Its development is not completely understood but is probably multifactorial and in particular involves a reduction in the hormonal output of the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and ovaries. Coupled with this is an energy drain, decreased food intake, increased emotional and physical stress from high training loads, and decreased body fat below a critical limit, which is different for each person.

Osteoporosis is a condition of demineralization caused by bone calcium loss. For young athletes this may be similar to that in an early menopausal woman. It has at least two distinguishing features: decreased bone mass, and micro-architectural changes in bones which increase fragility. Bone health depends on the interplay between available calcium, exercise and estrogen levels. Both exercise and estrogen stimulate bone mineralization. The longer the period of amenorrhea and the greater the extent of bone mineral loss, the greater the risk of being “young with old bones.”

The common causes of **iron deficiency** and **anemia** are inadequate iron intake/absorption and iron losses through sweat, urine, and menstruation. Although somewhat expensive, blood tests are useful tools in monitoring an athlete’s response to training and competition. The **serum ferritin iron** level is the best marker for the onset of iron depletion in a female distance runner. Doctors are often resistant to testing serum ferritin levels, but we highly encourage you to insist on including this specific test. Ferritin levels below mid to high 20’s should be considered low and need corrective action.

We strongly urge you to get your daughter’s iron level checked regularly – at least annually. **See the NEXT page.**

Iron Testing

To the Parents of Downers Grove South Girls Cross Country Athletes:

The purpose of this letter is to strongly urge you to get your daughter's iron level checked regularly – at least annually. Anemia, which is the clinical term for low-iron, has derailed too many seasons for our athletes over the years. I want to do everything to prevent the disappointment of a season lost to anemia from being repeated within our program. Girls lose iron through menstruation and are more susceptible to anemia than are their male counterparts. Put simply, when a runner is anemic, the blood cannot carry oxygen to the muscles in the necessary amounts. A runner becomes fatigued and cannot perform at her best. Fortunately, though common among female distance runners, anemia is normally preventable or treatable. Unfortunately once anemia is detected; it can take months for an athlete to get back to normal.

Step 1: Eat iron-rich foods daily. This includes red meat, spinach and other leafy greens, and many beans. For a more complete list, visit the American Red Cross website: <http://www.redcrossblood.org/learn-about-blood/health-and-wellness/iron-rich-foods>

Step 2: Know what baseline iron levels. The most accurate measure to use is the **serum ferritin test**, a measure of the iron by the blood. Occasionally doctors choose not do this particular test without a previous indication of anemia. However it is known that serum ferritin is the best predictor of future trouble with anemia. Low ferritin levels are directly related to the onset of iron deficiency. Once beset by the symptoms of iron deficiency, even without anemia, a runner will often lose the entire season of normal performance. A serum ferritin level below 30 indicates that the levels are low and supplementation is needed. A measurement below 20 indicates serious trouble, and the runner is often symptomatic. The point is to prevent runners from dipping below 30, into the range where health and performance would be affected.

Two options for testing:

1. Call your daughter's doctor's office and request a ferritin level as advised by your daughters coach and offer to bring a copy of this letter. Please understand that since this is a 'screening' test it will probably not be covered by your insurance.
2. If there is a delay on the part of your daughters medical provider you can go to <http://requestatest.com> and set up an account and order online the serum ferritin test. Once the request is paid for you receive an email confirmation. You take your confirmation to one of several locations in the area during their open hours, no appointment needed. The serum ferritin test is \$29 and results take only one business day. You are notified by email once results are ready and you may view your results by signing into your account and going to your test result section. The test provider here in this area is LabCorp and they do business with all the medical centers in the area. LabCorp locations and operating hours for each are available on the <http://requestatest.com/>

If your daughter is found to have an abnormal ferritin it is important that her medical provider be advised.

To the extent you are comfortable and able; I would urge you to schedule this test if your daughter is to be a serious runner. I have seen too many seasons affected by anemia to be delicate about this issue. I hate to see a young person's hard work fail to pay off because of such a preventable condition. In the meantime, plan to make sure your daughter eats a diet rich in natural iron and strongly consider scheduling a serum ferritin test at least annually. Thanks you for your consideration on this vital issue.

Meet the Team Night

Boys and Girls Cross Country
Tuesday August 16, 2016
DGS Cafetorium

6:30pm Dick Pond Shoemobile (will also be available after the meeting)
7:00pm Parent/Athlete Information Meeting

You are invited to attend the annual Cross Country Meet the Team Night. The coaches will speak about the upcoming season, expectations they have, and introduce the athletes. This is a great chance to get to know the athletes and coaches of the DGS Cross Country teams.

The Dick Pond Athletics Shoemobile will also be here if you need to purchase running shoes or spikes.

The DGS Running Booster Club is asking each athlete's family to support the teams by joining the boosters. Membership costs \$35 (the least expensive sport at DGS!).

There will be other opportunities to help raise money for our teams including a 50/50 raffle and a Vintage Uniform Sale.

The parents of DGS Cross Country athletes help run the home meets by working at the finish line, out on the course (and at the concession stand during Saturday meets). A volunteer sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting. Please consider helping at the meets. This year's home meets are:

Monday – 8/29/2016	Addison Trail	4:30 pm
Monday – 10/3/2016	Morton	4:30 pm