

# (ALMOST) EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMING OUT FOR TRACK AND FIELD

At this point, the coaching staff has well over 150 of combined seasons of track & field experience, which means that sometimes we can forget what track looks like to someone new to the sport. Here's our attempt at answering some common questions. If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact Eric Klein ([eklein@schs.k12.mn.us](mailto:eklein@schs.k12.mn.us)) or Russ Barclay ([rbarclay@schs.k12.mn.us](mailto:rbarclay@schs.k12.mn.us)).

- 1. Events**—The most common question from new track athletes: what events am I going to do? The coaching staff will work with the athlete to determine that based on interests of the athlete and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. We always seek to have athletes competing in events where they will be most successful.
- 2. Running Shoes**—The general rule of thumb regarding track shoes: *students need a pair of running shoes that are used ONLY for running*. Sometimes we have athletes who will come to practice in the same tennis shoes they wear to school every day. The problem with this is that your shoes get worn in different places when you walk than when you run, which means the support and structure of the shoes breaks down differently. Training in non-running shoes can lead to a range of injury issues from nagging shin splints to stress fractures. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that all athletes have proper footwear. Our recommendation would be to visit TerraLoco in Rochester. They offer 20% off if you mention you are competing for St. Charles, and they have a very knowledgeable staff who can help find the shoe that works best for you. They're pricier, but you get quality for your price (whereas "running" shoes purchased at Wal-Mart are cheaper but poor quality). Shoes purchased at TerraLoco will last (if used for just running) 400-500 miles of running.
- 3. Spikes and Event-Specific Footwear**—in track, athletes compete in spikes, and each event has their own specific type of spikes that provide a definite advantage over an athlete not in spikes (throwers are the only exception to this; they don't wear spikes, but specific throwing shoes instead). Spikes not only have better traction but also are significantly lighter (studies show that removing 1 oz. of weight from footwear decreased time by 1 second per mile, not including time dropped by increased traction efficiency). The point is this: there is NO reason from a competition standpoint to not wear spikes. All varsity athletes competing in running/jumping events are required to wear spikes.
  - a. With middle school athletes, spikes are strongly recommended, but not required. A good pair of spikes can last an entire career, but not if the athlete grows out of them. If a student wants to buy a pair of spikes to compete in middle school, great. However, if they wish to wait until 9<sup>th</sup> grade when there's more certainty in their foot size, that's fine too. However, if they are a junior high athlete hoping to make varsity, spikes are necessary.
  - b. Spikes are typically a lot cheaper than training shoes, and can be found at the same running locations in Rochester or online. Make sure you consult your events coach or a running store employee before purchasing spikes or throwing shoes to make sure you're getting an appropriate pair. You would not want to wear, for example, a pair of sprinter spikes to run the 3200m, or distance spikes to do pole vault. If you are new to track and field, wait to purchase spikes until after the season has begun and we've determined your events.
  - c. Please note, too, that certain length of spikes (as in the metal insert in the shoe) are illegal. We strongly recommend 3/16-inch spikes; any longer could get you disqualified at some meet. We have a supply of 3/16<sup>th</sup> inch spikes that athletes can buy 8-for-\$1, which is quite a bit cheaper than anywhere else.
- 4. Practice Procedure and Expectations**
  - a. Athletes need to be at practice, and any absence must be cleared by the head coach ahead of time.
  - b. That being said, academics and family ALWAYS take precedence over track. If such issues are preventing you from practicing effectively, make sure you communicate those issues to the head coach.
  - c. We have fun and work hard at practice. Athletes should be prepared to do both.
  - d. **Practice Schedule**—Track practice has a certain degree of inconsistency in terms of "time frame" simply because each athlete is doing different events which require different workouts on different days. Every day will end at a different time. As a general prediction, however: early in the season, practices typically finish up between 5:30-6 (junior high finish earlier). Later in the year, practices end closer to 5:00-5:30 as the kids get more efficient in their work. If there is a day that is expected to go significantly longer or shorter, we will convey that to parents.
  - e. **Attire**—all athletes need to be prepared to compete outside *regardless* of weather. We are not afraid of rain or snow. If it is a dangerous situation outside (ex. lightning, fire raining from the sky) we practice inside. However,

every athlete should be prepared every day for any weather. This means EVERY DAY they should have warm weather attire (shorts, t-shirt), cold weather attire (running pants, sweatshirts, hats, gloves), & rainy weather attire (rain jacket) in their locker just in case.

- f. **Watches**—Nearly 30% of St. Charles students do track and field. Because of this, it is difficult for the coaching staff to get effective times on students in practice (as one coach's watch cannot track 60 kids' times). Therefore, we ask that all athletes (throwers excepted) have their own stopwatch for practice. These do not need to be fancy; they can be absolutely cheap, so long as they start and stop.

## 5. Meet Procedure and Expectations

- a. **Meet Procedures**—A track meet follows the same order of events every time (with occasional exceptions). Field events will kick off simultaneously at the beginning of the meet, with girls and boys alternative, while track events proceed as follows: 4x800, 110/100HH, 100m, 4x200, 1600, 4x100, 400m, 300IH, 800m, 200m, 3200m, 4x400. Meets typically start at 4:30, and (depending on how many teams are competing) go until around 9:00. Athletes are expected to be involved in ALL events, either by directly competing or by cheering for their teammates. Because of this, it is never acceptable for an athlete to leave the meet after they've finished with their events for the day, including home meets. A basketball player wouldn't go home after being taken out of the game in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter...nor should a track athlete leave after finishing their events.
- b. **Bus Expectations for Away Meets**—*All athletes are expected ride to the bus to meets and ride them back with their team.* The coaching staff recognizes that sometimes it may be more convenient for the parents to take their kid after the meet; however, we also believe that this convenience is almost always at the expense of the student, & an expense a parent sometimes doesn't recognize. We firmly believe that the moments that stick with a kid after they've graduated are not always the times they had in competition, but rather the good times they had on bus rides back from those competitions. Furthermore, it's important for the team to have that time to process the meet's successes and failures together. Each individual has a unique and irreplaceable contribution to this team. Therefore, athletes are expected to ride the bus home from every competition.
- c. **Home Meet Expectations**—Athletes are, of course, expected to stay and support their teammates until the conclusion of the meet. They should also stick around afterward to help with any cleanup that may need doing and should not leave the stadium until they've gotten the OK to depart from a coach.
- d. **Team Camp**—our team camp serves a very, very specific purpose. It IS a place where athletes can go to mentally and emotionally prepare for their impending competition. It IS a place where athletes can go to peacefully process an event they just completed. It is NOT a hang-out spot for athletes who have finished competing for the day, it is NOT a place for an athlete to eat their supper (remember, there are runners around you who *can't* eat because they've got a race coming up), it is NOT a place for parents to meet with their kids, and it is absolutely not a place for other schools' athletes. It's the equivalent of the bench in basketball: you may not be in the game, but that doesn't mean your grandmother can join you there. Please do your part in making sure camp remains what it needs to be for our athletes to be successful.
- e. **Meet Info**—All meet information (starting times, competition, lineups, etc.) is posted for athletes at least two days before the meet. We will also email out all meet information to parents as well.

## 6. Nutrition and Health—

- a. **Premeet Eat**—for supper the night before a meet and for lunch the day of, eat something that you can digest easily (pastas, salads, PB&J sandwich). Please, for your sake and ours, don't eat Taco Bell.
- b. **Meet**—you should certainly pack food for a meet, but pack wisely. Sometimes athletes, looking for "energy," will have a Subway sandwich with chips and a pop 45 minutes before their race. They're only slowing themselves down trying to do something a granola bar could have done. Recommended foods to pack for a meet: PBJ sandwich, granola bars, nuts, yogurt, crackers.
- c. **Sleep**—You need more of it. Go get it! It dramatically reduces injury risk & amplifies workout effectiveness.
- d. **Water**—again, odds are, you're not drinking enough of it. Fix that! Have a water bottle in school with you and guzzle it every day—even if it isn't hot out. You'll need to be hydrated for practice regardless.

If there are questions that aren't answered here, please don't hesitate to contact Coach Klein ([eklein@schs.k12.mn.us](mailto:eklein@schs.k12.mn.us)) or Coach Barclay ([rbarclay@schs.k12.mn.us](mailto:rbarclay@schs.k12.mn.us)). More information about the St. Charles Track and Field Program can be found at our webpage, [www.scsaintstrack.com](http://www.scsaintstrack.com). Team updates can be followed via Twitter @SCSaintsTrack.