

Cross-country team races into season without a coach

Joe Yang, Contributing Writer

MSMS students are no strangers to rigorous academics. A glance into any classroom will find students deeply engrossed in complex problems and intense discussions. But what many might not realize is once the classroom discussions are over, a group of students trades their textbooks and calculators for running shoes.

Welcome to the behind-the-scenes of the MSMS cross-country team.

This is a different kind of year for MSMS's runners. They're leading this time around – no official coaches at practice. Their passion and peers are guiding the way. Although Coordinator for Activities Veleria Scott supports the team and makes competition happen, she is not there during day-to-day practices. The three co-captains – seniors Gavin Weinstein, Roman Luckett and Andrew Grieve – host and manage workouts at practice instead.

Running without a dedicated coach might sound daunting, but Weinstein said he embraces it.

“My goal for this upcoming season is for everybody to have fun and improve their times,” Weinstein said.

He isn't the only one with aspirations. With a team triple in size compared to last year, there's a mix of seasoned runners and eager newcomers. For many new runners, the season is all about getting a feel for the sport, understanding their pace and setting personal milestones. The focus isn't just on personal growth but on team growth, too. There's hope to solidify a lasting cross-country legacy at MSMS.

However, the team already faced unexpected challenges this season. With an excessive heat warning issued in the Columbus area, runners switched practice routines. Instead of its usual outdoor routes, the team shifted gears and utilized the indoor track and treadmills available at Stark Recreation Center to ensure the team kept up with its training.

Luckett also identified the unique challenge of holding practices at MSMS and said it's a challenge to not start practices until school officially begins. However, he said the residential aspect of MSMS offers more flexibility.

“We're not confined to strict hours; we can run early mornings or later in the evening,” Luckett said.



Gavin Weinstein

Senior cross-country team members Ean Choi (left) and Roman Luckett practice in preparation for the upcoming meet. The team travels to Mooreville High School on Sept. 9 for the next competition.

The growth in numbers of the MSMS cross-country team this season has not compromised the tight bond they share.

“Even though we are a bigger team this year, I think we’ll still be really close-knit,” Lockett said. “We see each other so often throughout the day, unlike other teams. This frequent interaction allows us to have a stronger bond, making us a cohesive team.”

Grieve agreed and said his vision for the team focuses on keeping cohesiveness going in the future.

“If we can get all these juniors to truly embrace cross country and run next year, the [team’s] legacy can continue,” Grieve said.

While practices and jogs are all good fun, the team has specific meets runners are looking forward to. A few are aiming for personal bests, and of course, the state championship is always in sight. As the season unfolds, MSMS will not only witness impressive athletic accomplishments but also the strengthening of a community running together.

This year, the cross-country team will travel to seven meets:

Aug. 26: Eupora High School @ 9 a.m.

Sep. 9: Mooreville High School @ 8:30 a.m.

Sep. 16: Saltillo High School @ 2:30 p.m.

Oct. 9: Starkville High School @ 4:30 p.m.

Oct. 14: Pontotoc High School @ 11 a.m.

Region 1A, 2A, 3A Divisional Meet: New Albany Sports Complex

MHSAA 1A, 3A, 5A State Championship: Choctaw Trails Clinton