

How a Parent Can Help Support their Student-Athlete

It's great to see parents who are excited and want to be involved in the sport and support their child. Here are a few thoughts about how parents can be involved in constructive ways:

- ❖ Create a supportive environment at home that allows athletes to be involved in team activities
- ❖ Encourage athletes to be eating healthy, drinking frequently, and getting enough sleep
- ❖ Know the team schedule and plan activities accordingly
- ❖ Help athletes see the good in their development and progress, even when it seems to be limited
- ❖ Listen to athletes as they talk through issues - don't solve their problems, allow them to solve them themselves (with appropriate guidance)
- ❖ Talk positively about teammates and coaches
- ❖ Allow coaches to coach and don't undercut the program's philosophies and principles
- ❖ Be involved in volunteer opportunities: hosting team parties, bring team snacks, helping with camp, helping with the team banquet, coming and running with the team

Nutrition

A great way for parents to support their athlete is to provide healthy meals. Often runners are focused on weight thinking they need to be extra skinny to run fast; however, the reality is much different. We need strong healthy runners. So, runners need to be eating three solid meals a day with healthy snacks mixed in. Foods/nutrition to focus on: proteins, carbs, and iron. Lean meats, peanut butter, nuts, leafy greens, yogurts, fresh veggies and fruits, and pastas are among the great foods to be eating. There are a lot of resources online to help with healthy eating for runners.

Hydration

... is key for runners. Athletes should be drinking around 100 oz. of water a day (although all body types are different). Athletes should build up to this over time. And consistent drinking is much healthier than guzzling a lot one day (or at one time) and then struggling other times. Runners should also supplement their hydration with some form of electrolyte drink as well. A 16-32 oz. Gatorade/Powerade (or any of the many other brands of sports drinks) per day will help the body stay hydrated and full of electrolytes throughout the hot months.

Practice in the Heat

Speaking of hydration - It's hot around here! So we do run in the heat. Help your athlete keep hydrated and get good sleep to counter some of the effects of the heat. Another thing is to make sure your athlete is wearing good moisture-wicking materials for shorts, shirt, and socks. Cotton is out! Another thing that helps is actually acclimating to the heat. Encourage your

athlete to get out into the sun on occasion (like when we start doing our easy afternoon runs) and build up some tolerance for the heat.

Shoes

We don't need a lot of stuff to run, but we do need shoes... good shoes. What is a good shoe? One that fits to your foot. A good shoe for one person may not be the right shoe for another. Also, unfortunately, the cheapest are usually not that great. So a suggestion is to go to a running specialty store and get fitted for the correct shoe. It is also suggested to have a couple pairs of shoes to rotate daily. This can be expensive at first, but will help shoes last longer (making them cheaper in the long run). One way to do this is to stagger getting a new pair before the old pair is actually dead. Shoes usually last between 300-500 miles. Many of our more experienced athletes will run about 500 miles this summer and then another 100 during the school year. Why do we need good shoes and new shoes often? Because that is where injuries come from. The first sign of a worn out shoe is little injuries and aches adding up and getting worse each day.

Importance of Practice

It is so important to be to practice. All running is a building process and missing time really can set back the aerobic development. Please help encourage your athlete to be to practice. When out of town, help your athlete be able to get some running in. That's one of the beauties of running, you can do it any place, any time. Maybe hitting the hotel treadmill is the best option. Or possibly taking your athlete to a park, a parking lot, or even running up and down the street while you watch is best. Any way, getting something in is always better than nothing, and it is always a possibility.

How to Start Running

So how does one get this thing going if you haven't really run before (this is good info for anyone starting, not just a HS kid)? People keep running if they are having fun and the thing that takes the fun out of running the most is injury. The key to staying healthy is starting small and having consistency. There are really three times our risk of injury is higher: beginning a running program, when we add new stress (like going faster), and when our shoes are worn out. So we can control the beginning by starting small. A good idea is to work up to 20 minutes of running for a week straight before you add anything else. Some people are able to run 20 mins straight, but others need to include some run/walk. If doing run/walk, time the efforts - run 1 min, walk 1 min - and do this for a few days to a week. Then you can add another minute to the run and slowly eliminate the walk. Eventually you will hit the 20 minute running mark and you'll be healthy and having fun(!) and ready to add a little more time.