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Welcome Letter

Dear Student-Athlete,

On behalf of the Pittsburg High School Cross Country team, I would like to welcome you to the 2014 season! We’re excited to have you join us as part of our team this season and can’t wait to make some lifelong memories together. Cross Country is a unique sport in that it requires no previous experience at all. When looking at many other sports, there seems to be this belief that a certain level of skill and talent is required to succeed. But in the world of Cross Country, the only “skills and talents” needed to be successful are hard work and dedication. Each year, both experienced and inexperienced athletes are recruited to the team and both find that they are able to accomplish their goals after giving a little hard work and dedication to becoming better. This sport will test both your physical and mental capabilities in ways that you may never have tested them before. You will have the opportunity to grow not only as an athlete, but also as an overall individual as you learn skills in teamwork, leadership, time management, work ethic, health, physiology, nutrition, & much more. What you get from your experience in the sport will be entirely based on what you put into it. Nobody else can make that decision for you but yourself. You could choose to be average, to be good, or to be great. This is YOUR team and each and every one of you have the opportunity and the ability to make an impact on it. In this sport, you have complete control of your destiny. With that said, I again welcome you to the Pittsburg High School Pirates Cross Country family and I look forward to watching you grow.

Happy Running!

Head Coach Casey Trias
Meet the Head Coach

Head Coach Casey Trias

An alumni of Pittsburg High School Class of 2009, Coach Casey began his background in sport his freshman year of high school. During the summer before arriving at PHS, he spent his time trying out for the Freshman Football team. As the school year began, he realized that he lacked the skills needed to receive the playtime he wanted in the sport. Soon after the school year began, he took a step away from football and joined Cross Country. Not having any idea of the sport, he began as a below-average runner at the back of the race pack, averaging over 9 minute miles for two miles. However, as the season continued, he was awarded BVAL First Team All League for Frosh-Soph and was granted a position on the Varsity team to attend the North Coast Section (NCS) meet as a freshman. He continued his running throughout high school by also participating in Track & Field and improved his personal best from an 18:46 two mile to a 16:09 three mile. Other activities he was involved with at PHS include: Junior & Senior Class Treasurer, Marching Show Band (Trumpet, Drill Instructor), Pep Band, Wind Ensemble, Academic Decathlon (Captain), Key Club, Mu Alpha Theta (Vice President), California Scholastic Federation (Club Rep), and Pirate Tech.

Casey continued his education after high school by attending the University of California, Davis where he studied cellular and molecular level exercise physiology as well as cognitive and biological psychology. While relatively young, this will not be his first time working with athletes as he has had experience assisting past PHS Cross Country and Track & Field athletes, coaching elementary school and middle school PE classes and after school programs, and serving as an athletic trainer for NCAA Division 1 athletes. Casey is excited to work with the runners and hopes to make it a season we all won’t forget.

Current positions held:
  • Sports Medicine & Performance Junior Specialist (UC Davis Medical Center)
  • East Bay Regional Grassroots Marketing Representative (Road Runner Sports)
  • USATF Sports Science Team Member, (USA Track & Field United States Olympic Committee)

Education:
Exercise Biology, Bachelor of Science, University of California - Davis
Psychology, Bachelor of Science, University of California - Davis
Music, Minor, University of California - Davis

Certifications & Memberships:
USA Track & Field Certified Coach
American College of Sports Medicine
National Federation of State High School Associations
Diversity Leadership Development
Emotionally Intelligent Leader
Meet the Assistant Coaches

Assistant Coach Steve Bhatia

An alumnus of Pittsburg High School Class of 2009, Steve enjoyed playing basketball throughout his childhood. He joined the basketball team while at a young age at Hillview Jr. High School where he was a member for three years. His basketball coach soon realized that Steve was a pretty good runner so he recommended that he try out for the Cross Country team at Pittsburg High. As a freshman, he fell in love with the sport and by his sophomore year he was placed on the varsity team. He was given the opportunity to run at the North Coast Section (NCS) meet that year and continued running throughout the rest of his high school career. Other activities he was involved with at PHS include: Puente, AVID, Leadership, Wrestling, Golf and Track & Field. After high school, Steve continued his education at Los Medanos College where he earned his A.A. degree and obtained the specific prerequisites to pursue the RN (Registered Nurse) program. He is currently working towards his BSN degree (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) and is hoping to end his education with an APRN (Advanced Practice Registered Nurse) Master’s degree.

Assistant Coach Denise Topete

An alumnus of Pittsburg High School Class of 2009, Denise played soccer while growing up, but was influenced by her older brother and other upper classmen to join the Cross Country team. She was hesitant at first and she didn’t even want to go to the first day of practice as questions of doubt kept bothering her. Fortunately for her she was forced to go since her brother was her only ride home and was able to see that runners a peculiar bunch of athletes that bond through our runs and smile when other athletes complain about doing laps as punishment while we run twice that in warm ups. She decided to continue running as she loved the team atmosphere and developed a love for the sport, by the end of her freshman year she was placed on varsity and was given the opportunity to run at the North Coast Section meet. She continued running Cross Country throughout high school and also participated in Track & Field. Other activities she was involved with at PHS include: Marching Show Band, Wind Ensemble, Key Club, and Mu Alpha Theta. After high school Denise continued her education at St. Mary’s College where she earned her bachelor’s degree in Kinesiology as well as a minor in Spanish.
What is Cross Country?

Cross Country is a unique sport in that it is both individual and team based.

**Divisions:**
There are three (3) divisions of competition in High School Cross Country:

- **Varsity / Junior Varsity / Frosh-Soph**

**Varsity:** The top 7 fastest athletes regardless of grade usually compete in this division. Invitational and post season competition limits team size to 7 runners. However, BVAL dual meet rules allow teams to run as many as 9 athletes in Varsity competition. Allowing more than 7 runners in Varsity competition is done at the discretion of the coaching staff usually for the purpose of providing experience for future Varsity athletes, run-offs between athletes competing for a Varsity position, or as reward for exemplary conduct by veterans. (Non-scorers will wear marked uniforms.)

**Frosh-Soph:** This division is restricted to Freshmen and Sophomores only. The top 7 fastest Frosh or Soph athletes usually compete in this division. The exception to this would be if a Freshman or Sophomore were placed on Varsity. Invitational competition sometimes limits team size to 7 runners. However, most often there is no limit to number of entries in Frosh-Soph competition.

**Junior Varsity:** There are no grade restrictions or team size limitations for this division. However, a school must field a Varsity team consisting of their top 5 or more runners before a Junior Varsity team can be entered. Junior or Senior athletes not among the top 7 fastest on the team compete in this division. Freshmen or Sophomores may also compete in this division, usually to provide better depth or to balance race fields.

**Race Distances:**

**VARSITY** race distance for BVAL, NCS, and CIF competition is 3 miles or 5k (3.1 miles). Meets may vary depending on the course, but are never less than 2 mi or longer than 5k. **FROSH-SOPH** and **JUNIOR VARSITY** race distance is 2 miles.

**Race Scoring:**
The top 7 finishers for each team are factored into the final team score. Teams with less than 5 members are "incomplete" and those finishers are not counted in overall scoring. The place a runner finishes in equals the number of points contributed to their team. The sum of the top 5 finishing places for each team represents the team’s total score. The lowest score wins. In the event of a tie, the 6th finishing place for each team determines the winner. The 6th and 7th finishing team members are also able to push back the score of opposing teams by finishing before the opposing team’s top 1-5 runners. At the individual level, runners are able to compete for individual awards at invitational such as medals, shirts, shoes and other gear.
What is Cross Country?  (cont.)

Cross Country is a unique sport in that it is both individual and team based.

**Uniforms:**
All Cross Country competitors must wear the school issued race uniform. Any additional forms of apparel (undergarments, compression shirts, shorts, sports bras) must be a solid black and worn beneath the uniform.

All jewelry items including rings, facial/body piercings, necklaces, bobby pins, hair clips, bracelets, are **NOT** allowed in competition! Watches **ARE** allowed.

**Disqualifications:**
Athletes may be disqualified for the following reasons:
- Uniform violation
- Use of profanity
- Impeding or interfering with a competitor
- Physical contact with an opposing runner
- Failure to run designated course

**Post Season Competition:**
**Varsity:** (Top 7 Men, Top 7 Women; possible additional substitutes)
- BVAL Championships = Automatically qualify
- NCS Championships = Automatically qualify
- CIF State Championships = Must be among the top two (2) teams or be among the top five (5) individuals **NOT** on a qualifying team who finish in the top twelve (12) at NCS.

**Frosh-Soph & Junior Varsity:**
- BVAL Championships = Automatically qualify

**How to Win the Bay Valley Athletic League (BVAL) Championship title?**
The final BVAL Team Championship standings are determined by a combination of equally weighted results from regular season BVAL dual meet competitions in October and results at the BVAL Championship meet on November 6th, 2014. There are **NO** ties.

**Varsity Men & Women:**
- Top 10 Individuals @ BVAL Championship Meet = First Team All League
- Top 11-20 Individuals @ BVAL Championship Meet = Second Team All League
Team Goals

Each and every individual will join the team with their own personal set of goals they want to accomplish and benefits they want to gain from being on the team. It is important however, to understand that Cross Country IS a team sport and there must be shared goals amongst ALL team members in order for the team to work together to have an enjoyable experience and a successful season.

“Individual commitment to a group effort -- that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” – Vince Lombardi

Here is what every member (athletes, managers, parents, coaches, fans) of the Pittsburg Pirate Cross Country team will need to commit to moving forward:

- Every athlete must finish a 2-mile race without stopping or walking.
  - It may sound difficult for some but it can and WILL be done. Support your teammates in accomplishing this goal, especially those who are more challenged by the task.

- Make the sport of Cross Country more widely known throughout PHS.
  - Many people don't know what cross country is or have false views of it. (i.e. “Oh you mean track?”... NO!) Educate others and encourage them to try the sport or at least support the team by cheering at meets.

- Earn the Bay Valley Athletic League Team Championship title.
  - Pittsburg has not won this title in over 20 years and each and every year is a fresh new opportunity to strive for it. I BELIEVE THAT WE WILL WIN!

- Earn the North Coast Section Team Championship title.
  - The last time Pittsburg earned this title was when the Pirate men won the title in 1966. It is not an impossible feat. It was done before and can be done again.

- Qualify for the California Interscholastic Federation State Meet.
  - Pittsburg has had very few athletes qualify for the state meet in its history. Moving forward, Pittsburg will strive to not only consistently make an appearance at the meet, but to also do well in the race.

- Establish exercise and good health as a priority in one’s daily life.
  - If there is one thing to gain from your experience in this sport, it should be to continue an active and healthy lifestyle when you’re done with it.

- Last but not least... HAVE FUN!
  - No sport is worth doing if you’re not able to have fun while doing it. This sport will have days when it will hurt and you will want to quit, but that is evident in almost everything you do in life. Overall, the experience you gain from participating in this sport should be a positive one. ENJOY IT!
Team Principles & Values

“It’s nice to be great, but far greater to be nice.” – Joe Newton

All members of this team will also be held to a standard of discipline and respect. In order to do so, the following principles and values must be followed:

- **Earn gratification and satisfaction through commitment and effort.**
  - No matter what the end result, you are successful when you are dedicated and work hard.

- **Don’t be afraid to fail, then keep on trying.**
  - Everyone successful has failed multiple times before they got to where they are. That’s the only way to learn what works and what doesn’t. Some people are afraid to fail and always stay in that comfort zone. Step out, challenge yourself, and see what happens. You’ll never know until you try.

- **Be an impact person.**
  - This is YOUR team. You have the ability to make a difference each and every day. Do at least one thing everyday that makes you or your team better.

- **Be involved in every team fundraiser.**
  - Even the most minimal contribution can go a long way. Play your part and help your team be successful. More funds means more fun for everyone.

- **Give 110% effort at practice and 120% effort at meet competitions.**
  - If you’re going to put time into doing something, you might as well try your best. Why give anything less than your best? When you’re at practice, you need to be working hard and giving over 100% effort to benefit as much as possible from the workout. During a race, you will be faced with an even greater challenge that will require even more effort.

- **Accept your teammates for who they are and support them.**
  - Every single human being is different in terms of personality, experience, culture, shape, size, etc. As you move forward in life, you will need to learn to work with all kinds of different people in order to achieve success. Be kind and respect all members of your team.

- **Believe in your coaches and your teammates. But most importantly, believe in yourself.**
  - There will be times when you will question your ability to do something. Your coaches will always support you and believe in you. Help your teammates and show them that you believe in them too.

- **Do the best you can, with what you have, on that day.**
  - All anybody could ever ask you to do is give your best. Nobody can ask for more. Your coaches will never ask you to do anything they don’t believe you can do. They may challenge you and it may be tough or awkward at first, but they will never ask you to do anything that is impossible or that they have not already seen done before.
**General Team Rules**

**Practice Attendance:** Each and every athlete is expected to attend ALL primary practice sessions Monday through Friday and arrive on time in proper workout clothes.

**Wednesday:** 2:30PM-5:00PM  
**Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Friday:** 3:30PM-5:30PM  
**Special Minimum Days:** 1:00PM-3:00PM

Every effort must be made to student-athlete’s schedule so that there are no conflicts with daily practice. If a valid reason for missing practice exists (illness or emergency), the athlete must notify the Head Coach or an Assistant Coach prior to the practice that will be missed. It is at the discretion of the coaching staff to determine whether or not athletes who are ill and unable to complete practice sessions within 72 hours prior to a competition date will be allowed to race. (2 Tardies = 1 Absence)

1st Unexcused Absence = Athlete is not allowed to compete in the following meet.

2nd Unexcused Absence = Athlete is not allowed to compete in the following meet and may be dropped down in competition division level for future meets.

3rd Unexcused Absence = Risk of termination from the team.

*****PRACTICE IS HELD RAIN OR SHINE!*****

**Practice Uniform:** Proper clothing & gear is essential to having a safe and beneficial practice session. All athletes must bring the following to practice EVERYDAY:

- Running Shirt (Caution if shirt contains front design as it may cause chafing)
- Running Shorts (Must be above knee, i.e. no basketball shorts)
- Proper running shoes (Fit by trained specialist via running specialty store)
- Sports Bra (Females only)
- Running Watch w/ time & lap timer (Optional, but highly recommended)
- & most importantly, A POSITIVE ATTITUDE!

**Sample Practice Schedule:**
3:30 – 5 minute barefoot Warm Up (Must be dressed & on the turf warming up)
~3:35 – Team Stretches & Biomechanics Drills (Led by coach or veteran runners)
~4:00 – Team Announcements (Team updates, upcoming events, general information)
~4:05 – MAIN WORKOUT (Team will be assigned workouts based on skill level)
~5:05 – Two Lap Barefoot Cool Down
~5:10 – Stretch & CORE Exercises (Specific stretches / exercises will be posted)
~5:30 – COMPLETION OF PRACTICE
**General Team Rules (cont.)**

**Meet Attendance:** Each and every athlete is expected to attend ALL meet competitions scheduled for the 2014 season. If for some reason an athlete cannot attend a meet or invitational due to a scheduling conflict, they must notify one of the coaches as soon as they are aware of the conflict to allow for proper coordination of teams. Athletes will be transported TO AND FROM meets via PUSD bus. **ATHLETES CANNOT BE TRANSPORTED VIA ANY OTHER METHOD WITHOUT SIGNING A TRAVEL FORM!**

**Meet Unexcused Absence Penalties:**

Missing a single BVAL related meet = No PHS Athletics Letterman Patch Awarded
Missing a single invitational meet = Possible Suspension from future invitationals

****Athletes MUST wear their team t-shirt, uniform & warm up gear to school on the day of a meet. Athletes must also be wearing their uniform prior to boarding the bus.**

**Mandatory Forms:** Each and every athlete is required to have the following forms completed prior to attending practice for the season. Please submit all completed forms to Coach Casey. ALL FORMS MUST BE RENEWED EVERY YEAR!

A. Emergency Contact Information
B. Student-Athlete Code of Conduct
C. Proof of Student Insurance (If no insurance, student must enroll in Student Accident Insurance; info also available on website)
   D. Concussion Information
   E. Student Health Physical

**Academic Eligibility:** In the term “student-athlete”, student is first. PER PITTSBURG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT RULES, ALL STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN A PUSD AFFILIATED SPORT MUST HAVE A MINIMUM 2.0 GRADE POINT AVERAGE TO BE ELIGIBLE. (Academic Probation is available; see Coach Casey for more info) For Cross Country specifically, you will be held to a higher standard of academic proficiency.

2.5 GPA < Suspension from Competing in Meets
   (still required to attend practice and meet competitions but cannot compete in uniform)
   3.0 GPA < Individual talk w/ Coaching Staff and/or teacher(s)

**Student-Athlete Study Hall:** (MANDATORY) All Freshmen and Sophomore level student-athletes are required to attend two hours of study per week. All Junior and Senior level student-athletes with a GPA below 3.0 must attend these two hour study hall sessions until GPA improves. (Opportunity for community service tutoring TBA)

   Tuesday/Thursday: 5:15pm-6:15pm @ TBA
   Meal Available: 3:03pm-3:30pm, Snack Available: 4:45pm-5:15pm
Fundraisers

Pittsburg Unified School District sports are unfortunately not supplied with any funds to pay for team supplies. All funds must be generated through team fundraisers or donations. Throughout the season, we will be doing various fundraisers to help increase the team fund. We ask that each and every athlete and parent support the team by playing an active role in each initiative.

The Pittsburg High School Cross Country program asks that each athlete contribute to the team fund to help cover the following expenses:

- Team shirts
- New team uniforms
- New team warm up jackets & sweatpants
- Practice equipment
- Meet Invitational entry fees
- Meet refreshments for athletes
- Overnight meet costs
- Travel expenses
- Banquet awards

Scheduled Fundraisers:

- **Road Runner Sports Team Night** – September 1st, 2014 5:30PM-8:00PM  
  *(Buy all running essentials; percent of sales will be given back to team)*
- **Team Car Wash** – September 6th, 2014 9:30AM-3:00PM  
  *(Everyone must bring an old towel)*
- **Friday Night Football Home Game Concessions** –5:30PM-10:00PM  
  *(Need at least 3-8 volunteers per football game)*
  - **Pittsburg 5K Fun Run** - TBA
  - **Karaoke Night** – TBA
  - **Straw Hat Pizza** – TBA
  - **Boxed Snacks** – TBA

Donations:

Students are able to ask for donations in the form of pledges and payments from friends, family, teachers, neighbors, businesses, and local community members. Any donation amount would be greatly appreciated and the contributor’s name will be properly thanked at the following PUSD board meeting. Please write all checks payable to:

“Pittsburg High School Cross Country”
Useful Links & Contact Information

Pittsburg High School Athletics - Cross Country:

Pittsburg High School Cross Country Facebook Fan Page:
http://www.facebook.com/pittpiratexc

Pittsburg High School Cross Country Instagram:
@pittpiratexc

Contra Costa Times - Bay Valley Athletic League (BVAL):
http://www.contracostatimes.com/bval

North Coast Section Cross Country:
http://cifncs.org/sports/cross_country

Prep Cal Track (California Wide Meet News & Results):
http://www.prepcaltrack.com

FLOTTRACK (Worldwide Running News & Videos):
http://www.flotrack.org

Contact Order:
Head Coach → Assistant Coach → Athletic Coordinator → Principal

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PITTSBURG HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS
PITT CROSS COUNTRY