

Parent's Guide to Track and Field 2009

Welcome to the 2009 SPASH Boys Track and Field season! Very soon, your son will come home after one of the first practices and announce, "I'm going to be a jumper!" You might say, "That's nice, what is a jumper?"

This parents' guide is intended to answer that question and give you enough related information so that you can attend your son's meets with some idea as to what's going on. Along the way you can read various details associated with the many avenues of competition that track and field has to offer. Although your son may opt to participate or specialize in one particular area, understand that a lot goes on during a track and field meet.

Remember, no question is a stupid question! If you're at a meet and don't quite understand something, ask a veteran parent!

Run fast, turn left!
Coach Streveler

What is Track and Field?

Track and Field is a team sport consisting of 14 individual events and 4 relays. These are divided into 6 field and 12 running (i.e. track) events.

Field events include:

Jumps

Pole Vault
High Jump
Long Jump
Triple Jump

Throws

Shot Put
Discus*

*outdoor season only

The running events are further divided into hurdles, sprints and distance:

Hurdles

60 meter highs**
200 meter intermediate**
110 meter highs*
300 meter intermediate*

Sprints

55 meter dash**
100 meter dash*
200 meter dash
400 meter dash
400 meter relay
800 meter relay
1600 meter relay

Distance

800 meter run
1600 meter run
3200 meter run
3200 meter relay

*outdoor season only

**indoor season only

A competitive event is called a meet. Depending on the size of the meet, a team may enter from 1 to 4 individuals per event with only one team per relay event.

How is a meet scored?

It depends on how many teams are in the meet. If there are more than five teams then points are scored as follows.

1 st place	10 points
2 nd place	8 points
3 rd place	6 points
4 th place	5 points
5 th place	4 points
6 th place	3 points
7 th place	2 points
8 th place	1 point

The points are totaled as the meet progresses. After all events are completed, the team with the most points wins.

What is the typical order of track events at a meet?

3200 meter relay
110 meter hurdles
55 meter dash (indoors)
100 meter dash (outdoors)
1600 meter run
800 meter relay
400 meter dash
400 meter relay
300 meter hurdles (outdoors)
800 meter run
200 meter dash
3200 meter run
1600 meter relay

Indoor Season

The indoor season officially begins with **practices** starting during the first week in March. **Meets** begin the second week in March and run for approximately 6 weeks. As the name implies, all meets are held indoors. Depending on the size of the facility and the number of teams competing, indoor meets can take up to 5+ hours to complete! The last indoor meet is the WVC Conference Indoor Championships. Varsity competes in one meet with Frosh/JV at another meet, usually on separate days. We do have three meets (one indoor and 2 outdoor) that the entire team compete together.

Outdoor Season

The outdoor season begins right after the completion of the indoor season. Given that we live in Wisconsin, it's best to keep your winter jackets, hats, gloves, scarves, hand warmers, boots and such readily available. It's not unusual for snow to fly during these early season outdoor meets! For Frosh & JV, the outdoor season comes to an end at the WVC JV Conference Outdoor Championships during mid-May. Because of the make up of the season it is possible for an athlete that was on JV to compete on Varsity after the JV season is over. Varsity athletes compete in the conference championships during the third week in May, but then move on to two qualifying meets (regionals and sectionals) for the state championships held at the very end of May or first weekend in June, depending on the calendar.

What's the deal with meters versus yards?

Although the U.S. has not converted to the metric system, it's actually quite easy to adjust to it during the outdoor season. A standard outdoor track is 400 metric meters:

One lap = $\frac{1}{4}$ mile
Two laps = $\frac{1}{2}$ mile
Three laps = $\frac{3}{4}$ mile
Four laps = 1 mile
Eight laps = 2 miles

Indoor tracks are always smaller and those located within high schools range anywhere from 133 yards (SPASH) to 160 yards (Marshfield and Wausau West). It's a bit more complicated and confusing to figure out how many laps equal a specific distance with some of these indoor facilities. Indoor tracks at colleges and universities are typically 200 meters which means the above number of laps are now doubled.

When the start time for a meet is listed as 4:00/4:30, what does this mean?

Field events start at 4:00 p.m. and running events at 4:30 p.m.

Typically field events begin before running events start because many athletes compete in both field and track events. Starting the field events prior to the track events allows these athletes to get their jumps, vaults, and throws in before they have to report to the track. Once started, the competition within a specific field event continues until completed. It is entirely possible that a jumper for example, will start his event, then compete on the track, and then report back to the field event for completion of his jumps.

The SPASH team departs the high school with enough time to allow athletes the appropriate warm-up time upon arrival at the meet.

In some indoor meets, the field events use part of the track and must be completed before the running events can begin.

Note the time the meet starts, the order of events and the event(s) in which your son is competing. You do not have to arrive at the beginning of the meet if your son is not competing in the first event.

Which athletes compete at the meets?

The SPASH team is divided into three squads: Frosh, JV, and Varsity. Track and Field is fairly black and white with respect to who gets to compete at which meet. Times, distances, and heights are exact and are very much the deciding factor. All individual meet results are recorded. If a JV athlete performs better than a varsity athlete in a particular meet, it is possible that the JV athlete will get to compete on the varsity level at the next meet. This applies in both directions: moving up a squad as well as being bumped down. The coach's discretion may also factor in.

How will I know what meet my son is competing at each week?

On Mondays the coaching staff distributes information about the week's competitions including where the meet is being held, approximate start times for field/track events, who is competing in what and the time of bus departure. It's up to you to get the information from your son. Information about the meets are also available on our website – www.spashtrack.com.

- Frosh only meets = only 9th graders compete
- JV meets = 9th-12th graders
- Varsity meets = 9th-12th graders

Homework, apparel, food, t-shirts, etc.

There is lots of down time at track meets. The more schools competing, the longer the meet. Your son should make a practice of taking his backpack and **homework** assignments with him to the meets. He should also check to see if someone else on the team has the same teacher or class and then try to finish the homework before arriving home from the meet. Some Varsity meets that run 4-6 hours after school mean that the athletes do not return home until well after 10:00 p.m. JV will typically arrive home before 8:30 p.m.

The **Track Apparel Order Form** is an *optional* opportunity to purchase SPASH track team clothing. Every track/field athlete will be issued a uniform. The team is too large in numbers to provide warm-ups for everyone which is why the track apparel is made available. If possible, consider having your son's name embroidered or written in on his apparel items. No identification on this many identical pieces of track apparel means the odds are good that your son might come home with someone else's clothing and vice versa.

Plan to send a **snack or extra lunch** with your athlete on meet days. Remember, meets run long! Gatorade, water or sports drinks are good beverages – NO SODA! Consult your event coach for specific snack/food suggestions. AVOID concession stand food. Most of the time, concessions are available for spectators to purchase and are not the types of food that the athletes should digest during competitions, especially greasy or fatty foods.

Specialty Meets

During the outdoor season SPASH competes in two meets that include events not found in the normal order of events.

The **WVC Conference Relays** utilize some JV and Varsity members since three or four people compete in each event at this one meet.

All running and field events are relays. In each field event, the heights or distances of three competing athletes are combined to determine place and scoring. There is the pole vault relay, a high jump relay, long jump, and triple jump relays as well as the discus and shot put relays.

In the hurdles, the times of the three competing athletes are totaled. The balance of the running events are baton relay races. The standard 400M, 800M, 1600M and 3200M relay events are contested as well as three special races seen only at an all relay meet. These are the 6400M relay, the distance medley relay and the sprint medley relay.

The 6400M relay consists of 4 athletes each running 4 laps or 1600 meters. The distance medley is made up of 400, 800, 1200 and 1600 meter legs each run by a different athlete.

The sprint medley consists of a 200, 200, 400, 800 meter legs, again each run by a different athlete.

The distance medley consists of a 1200, 200, 800, 1600 meter legs, again each run by a different athlete.

Monona Grove's Varsity Invite includes two scoring track events not seen anywhere else in the season: 600 meter run (1-1/2 laps) and the 1000 meter run (2-1/2 laps).

Definitions

2-Command start: Runners take your mark, followed by the gun. Used mostly in the distance events and in sprint races when no participant is using starting blocks.

3-Command start: Runners to your mark, set, followed by the gun. Used whenever any or all participants are using starting blocks.

Starting blocks: A device that consists of two metal blocks mounted on either side of an adjustable frame. Blocks are secured to the track and used to provide the runner with a rigid surface against which to brace his feet at the start of the race.

Lanes: A section of the track where an athlete starts or runs his entire race. A typical outdoor track has eight lanes. The lanes are numbered from the inside out with lane 1 being the inside lane and lane 8 being the outside lane. In sprints, hurdles, and sprint relay events the athlete or team runs the entire race in the same lane. In distance and distance relay events the athlete or team can use any lane.

Staggered Start: A staggered start is used in running events where each participant or relay team must run the entire race in the same lane. Because the distance covered from start to finish in lanes 2 through 8 increases with the circumference of the turns, the participants in lanes 2 through 8 start the race ahead of the athlete in lane 1. The amount of the head start is determined by the lane and the number of turns in the race.

Staggered starts are used in the 200M dash, 400M dash, 300M intermediate hurdles, 400M relay, 800M relay and 1600M relay. A staggered start is also used in the 800M run and 3200M relay. In these races the stagger is only for the first turn, after which the athlete can move to the inside lane.

Waterfall Start: A waterfall start is typically used for the 1600M and 3200M runs. The athletes in lanes 1 and 2 begin on the normal starting line. Those athletes in lanes 3 through 8 are afforded a 2 to 5 meter start advantage. (see waterfall start on the track map)

Relays: A single race where each of 4 team members runs an equal and specific distance. There are 4 relay events in a standard track meet. These are:

- 4x100M – Each athlete runs 100 meters
- 4x200M – Each athlete runs 200 meters
- 4x400M – Each athlete runs 400 meters
- 4x800M – Each athlete runs 800 meters

(See Specialty meets)

Exchange zone: 25 meter length of the track in which team members in a relay race must pass the baton. The beginning and end of the exchange zone is painted on the track in each lane. The number and location of the exchange zone(s) depends on the event and the stagger.

Exchange zone judge: Person who watches the exchange of the baton by each team in a specific exchange zone. If all exchanges are legal a white flag is held up for the meet officials to see. If an illegal pass has taken place, a yellow flag is held up. A team will be disqualified if the baton is passed outside of the exchange zone.

Seeds: As part of the registration process in large meets, coaches must submit times, distances and heights to the host school so that competitors can be grouped.

With respect to running events, seed times represent either an athlete's best performance time to date or perhaps a specific running time that the coach believes the athlete is realistically capable of.

For field events, seeds represent the athlete's best height or distance to date or that which the coach believes the athlete is realistically capable of.

Flights: Grouping of competing athletes in the same field event who have achieved similar heights (pole vault, high jump) or distances (long jump, triple jump, shot put, discus). Previous performance determines flight assignment.

Heats: A heat is a grouping of athletes with similar times competing in the same running event. In large meets not all of the athletes in a particular event can compete on the track at the same time. Each race is then broken down into heats. The number of heats is determined by the number of athletes in the event divided by the number that can compete simultaneously.

Seed times determine how athletes are assigned to a heat. In sprint events, the fastest seeds are split up over the total number of heats so that the faster athletes do not compete against each other until the semi-finals or finals.

For distance events, the slower seed times are generally in the first heats. The faster seed times in the last heat.

Description of Running Events

Sprints and Sprint Relays

Sprints are divided into 4 races:

- 55 meter dash (indoor season only)
- 100 meter dash
- 200 meter dash
- 400 meter dash

Competitors are assigned to heats and lanes based on seed times. The fastest seeds are positioned in the center lanes (4 & 5). From there, the next fastest

seeds are in lanes 3, 6, 2, 7, 1 & 8. Sprinters remain in their assigned lanes for the entire race. Most of the time, preliminary heats of the 55 meter, 100 meter and 200 meter dashes are run prior to the actual start of a track meet. The "prelims" ascertain the top 8 athletes within each event. It is these athletes who then compete in the finals of the 55, 100 and 200 meter dashes when these events come up in the normal running order of the meet.

SPASH 100 meter dash school record: 10.6	Ray Moore, '05
SPASH 200 meter dash school record: 21.6	Ray Moore, '05
SPASH 400 meter dash school record: 49.1	Randy Miller, '76

Sprint Relays are divided into:

- 400 meter relay
- 800 meter relay
- 1600 meter relay

There are 4 members to each relay team. Each member runs a distance equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total relay distance. For the 400 & 800 Meter Relays each team runs the entire event in the same lane and a staggered start is used. As with the 3200 meter relay, a cylindrical baton is passed or exchanged from runner to runner, all within a specified set of marks on the track. Again, failing to pass the baton within the approved exchange zone can cause disqualification.

When trying to decide who runs which leg of a relay, coaches look at the individual strengths of their relay runners. Some athletes can run the turns better than others. Some are very quick at getting out of the starting blocks; these athletes tend to lead off. Many times, the fastest relay runner runs the 4th or anchor leg. Sprint relays are interspersed throughout track meets. More often than not however, the meet winner is determined by the outcome of the last event of the meet, the 4x400.

SPASH 400 meter relay school record: 42.9	Rick Feltz, Anthony Shirek Jared Fohrman, Mitch Sutton '05
---	---

SPASH 800 meter relay school record: 1:28.4	Rick Feltz, Mitch Sutton Aaron Tetzloff, Ray Moore '05
---	---

SPASH 1600 meter relay school record: 3:22.8	Nate Olson, Bobby Burtley Josh Garbe, Cory Flisakowski '00
--	---

Hurdles

During a track meet there are two hurdle races. One is called high hurdles where the top of the hurdle is set 39 inches above the ground. The other is the intermediate hurdles where the top of the hurdle is 36 inches above the ground.

Indoors, the length of the hurdle races is 55 or 200 meters. Outdoors the length of the high hurdles is 110 meters and 300 meters for the intermediate hurdles. The athlete stays in his lane for the entire race. The 300 intermediate hurdle race includes one turn on the track and uses a staggered start. As the race progresses, the competitor who reaches each hurdle first is in the lead.

SPASH 110 meter high hurdles school record: 14.3 Jon Ofori-Amoah '99
SPASH 300 meter Int. hurdles school record: 39.8 Chris Larsen '89

Distance Events

800 Meter Run

Athletes competing in the 800 meter run (half mile) begin the race with a staggered boxed start. Typically, 3 runners are assigned to a box with one box using 2 lanes. The half-milers run the first turn in their assigned lane and are allowed to "cut in" to lane 1 at the 100 meter mark. As the lead runner begins the second or last lap, the starter will fire the gun or a bell is rung.

SPASH 800 meter run school record: 1:53.5 Chris Solinsky, '03

1600 Meter Run / 3200 Meter Run

Competitors in the 1600 meter run begin at the start line. The runners are lined up via seed times with the fastest runners securing the inside lane positions and the slower seed times positioned on the outside. Depending on the size of the meet there may be two to three heats of the 1600M run. Lane assignments at the beginning of the 1600 and 3200 races are only used to line up the competitors and a waterfall start is used if there are many competitors in the same heat. Runners are given a 2 command start. Once the gun goes off, athletes are free to jockey for position and are not required to remain in their assigned lane. There may be some pushing and shoving at the start of the race. Due to intense jockeying for position after the gun is fired, it is possible that some athletes might fall in the first 50-100 meters of the race. If that happens, the race will be stopped and restarted.

Runners must not hinder another athlete's progress. Stepping on a competitor, kicking a competitor or causing him to break stride is a reason for disqualification. As the race progresses, inside runners move quickly to lead "the pack". Runners on the outside carefully work their way to the front of the pack while trying not to get boxed in. Boxed in refers to athletes surrounding each other such that the runners have a difficult time passing. Outdoors, 1600 meters constitutes 4 complete laps of the track. As the lead runner begins the last lap, the starting official will fire his gun or a bell is rung.

The bar is raised in 2-inch increments until only six competitors remain. After that, the bar is raised by 1-inch increments.

The competition continues until the bar has reached a height where all of the remaining athletes have missed three times. The scoring is determined by the height achieved. First place goes to the highest height achieved, second place to the second highest, etc. In the case of a tie, the number of misses is used as the tie breaker.

SPASH High Jump school record: 7'-0" Eric Lind '85

Long Jump

In the long jump competitors sprint down a runway and jump as far as they can off of a wooden board into a pit filled with finely ground gravel or sand. The distance traveled by a jumper is often referred to as the "mark," because it is the distance to which the first mark is made in the sand. More specifically, a mark is the minimum distance from the edge of the takeoff board, nearest the landing pit, to the first indentation made by the competitor.

If the competitor starts the leap with any part of the foot in front of the board, the judge calls scratch, the jump is declared illegal and no distance is recorded.

In the preliminary rounds, each athlete is allowed three jumps. Once an athlete completes his first jump, he can immediately jump again, become the third person in line, go to the end of the line or jump later while the pit is open. All three jumps must be completed during the "open pit" time frame or the athlete's jumps are forfeited.

In meets with finals the athletes with the longest to ninth longest jumps qualify for the finals. Again each athlete is allowed three jumps with the competitors jumping in reverse order, last to first.

The finals competition continues until each athlete has completed three jumps. The scoring is determined by the length of the jump.

SPASH Long Jump school record: 22'-11.5" Rick Reichardt '61

Triple Jump

Triple jump could also be referred to as a "hop, step and jump", since those are the actions taken to compete in the event. Like the long jump, the athlete runs down a runway until he reaches a designated mark, from which the jump is measured. The takeoff mark is a board. The first landing has to be done with the takeoff foot. The next phase is a step, landing on the opposite foot, and is followed by the jump, into the pit.

Judging, number of jumps, preliminary, finals and scoring are the same as the long jump.

SPASH Triple Jump school record: 45'-7.75" Chris Voelker '84

Pole Vault

Like the high jump, competitors in this event must clear a horizontal bar that is supported on either end by stanchions that can be adjusted vertically.

The athlete takes a running start to approach, but uses a fiberglass pole to vault over the bar. The athlete lands on padded cushions again referred to as the pit.

Each competitor is allowed three attempts to clear a given height. If the athlete clears the height on the first attempt, he is scored as clearing the height with zero misses and continues in the competition when the bar is raised. If he misses, he may immediately try again or wait for his turn in the next rotation. If the height is cleared on the second attempt, he is scored as having cleared the height with one miss. If he misses on the second attempt and clears on the third attempt, he is scored as having cleared the height with two misses and continues in the competition as the bar is raised. If the athlete misses on all three attempts at height, he is out of the competition.

The bar is raised in 6-inch increments until only six competitors remain. After that, the bar is raised in 3-inch increments.

The competition continues until the bar has reached a height where all of the remaining athletes have missed three times. The scoring is determined by the height achieved. In the case of a tie, the number of misses is used as the tie breaker.

SPASH Pole Vault school record: 15'-6" Jim Kickland '85

Throws

Two events fall under the category of throws. These are the shot put and discus.

Shot Put

In this competition, as the name implies, competitors put (or throw in a pushing motion) the shot (a 12 pound solid metal ball) as far as possible.

Competitors take their throws from inside a 7-foot diameter circle with a 4-inch high toe board located at the front of the circle. The shot must land inside the throw area that is indicated by painted lines radiating out from the throwing circle. The distance thrown is measured from the inside the circumference of the circle

to where the shot lands or at the disturbance of the soil nearest the circle (outdoors).

A foul is called and the throw is disqualified if the athlete:

- does not leave from the rear half of the circle
- steps out of the circle before the judge calls the mark
- touches the top of the toe board
- the shot lands outside the throw area

In the preliminary round, each athlete is allowed three throws. The athlete may take all three attempts in the first round, make take the second attempt in the first round and the final attempt in the second round or one attempt in each of three rounds. All three attempts must be completed during the “open pit” time frame or the athlete’s throws are forfeited.

The athletes with the longest to ninth longest throws qualify for the finals. Again each athlete is allowed three throws with the competitors throwing in reverse order, last to first.

The finals competition continues until each athlete has completed his throws. Scoring is determined by the length of the throw.

SPASH Shot Put school record: 59’-4” Ross Kolodziej ‘96

Discus

The discus a lenticular disc, 220 mm (8.66 inches) in diameter and weighs 1.61 kilograms (3lb. 9oz.).

Competitors take their throws from inside a concrete surfaced circle 8’-2” in diameter. The thrower typically takes an initial stance facing away from the direction of the throw. He then spins around one and a half times through the circle to build momentum and then releases his throw. The discus must land within a 40-degree or 60-degree arc marked by lines on the landing zone, and the competitor must not exit the circle until the discus has landed. He must wait for the judge to give clearance to exit the ring from the rear half. The distance from the front edge of the circle to where the discus lands is measured. Distances are rounded down to the nearest half-inch.

Judging, number of throws, preliminaries, finals and scoring are the same as the shot put.

SPASH Discus school record: 175’-0” Ryan Kawski ‘03