

Frequently Asked Questions about Spokane Mercury

What events do you coach?

We are a distance running team. We train for cross country and distance events in track. We do not provide coaching for sprints, jumps, or throws.

In general, the following events are what we coach our kids to run and what are available at meets.

Age Group	Cross Country	Track
8 and Under	2000 meters	400 meters 800 meters 1500 meters
9-10	3000 meters	400 meters 800 meters 1500 meters
11-12	3000 meters	800 meters 1500 meters 3000 meters
13-14	4000 meters	800 meters 1500 meters 3000 meters
15-16	5000 meters	800 meters 1500 meters 3000 meters
17-18	5000 meters	800 meters 1500 meters 3000 meters

What age do you have to be in order to participate?

In general our age range is 7-18. We do work with kid who are younger than age 7, and we always have a conversation with their parents ahead of time to ensue being part of the team will be beneficial for our youngest athletes.

With such a wide age range, how do you meet the needs of all the kids?

We have three coaches and varying numbers of high school interns at practices. We thoughtfully group the kids into workout groups based on their training and competition goals as well as their current levels of fitness.

What is your coaching philosophy?

We are 100% positive with all kids. Our workouts are challenging, and our job is to encourage all participants to give their best effort at every practice. We expect athletes to come to practice ready to work hard and have fun. If we ever believe an athlete is not enjoying being part of the team, we will talk with parents to ensure participation is in the best interest of the athlete.

What ability levels do you coach?

We are committed to working with all kids who want to improve as distance runners regardless of their ability levels. We coach kids who have never run before but have a strong desire to learn about the sport and improve, as well as kids who have goals to become national competitors, state champions, or future collegiate athletes. We are a team for any kid who loves distance running.

Can we come to a practice to try it out before signing up?

In order to actually practice with the team, you need to sign up for a USA Track and Field membership, which costs \$20. The reason for this is that we guarantee to USATF and the facilities we use that all participants are USATF members for insurance purposes. Anyone is welcome to come watch a practice to see what it's like.

What days and times do you practice?

During the regular seasons of both track and cross country we practice on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:00-7:30 and Sunday afternoons from 4:00-5:00. The days are subject to change based on the availability of facilities, but they have been the same for the last six years and we don't intend to change them unless it's absolutely necessary. *See table below.

Where do you practice?

During the regular track season we practice at Hart Field on the South Hill on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During the extended season of track and the beginning of cross country season, we practice at Riverfront Park on all practice days. During cross country we move to Riverfront Park when it starts getting dark early because it is lighted. *See table below.

Can I participate in Mercury and my school track or cross country team at the same time?

Yes, you can participate in both, but we always want to make sure we aren't overtraining kids. When athletes want to participate in both at the same time, we always talk with them at the beginning of our practice to see what they've already done in a day so we can adjust our workouts if necessary. Many middle and high school athletes choose to come just on Sundays during their school seasons. ***Our regular seasons are designed to occur after elementary, middle, and high school seasons are completed.***

Do I have to compete?

We do not require everyone to compete. We do ask that you share your competitive plans with us as part of your registration so we can accurately plan our season.

What are the age groups for competition?

Age groups are determined based on **birth year**, not actual age or grade in school. For an entire calendar year, an athlete's age is considered to be whatever age he/she will be as of December 31 of that year. Age groups are as follows:

8 and Under (must be at least 7 years old in the calendar year to compete at a national meet)

9-10

11-12

13-14

15-16

17-18

For team scoring in cross country, the 15-18 year olds are combined to score as a team but are separated for individual placing and advancement.

Am I required to come to all the practices?

We do not require attendance unless an athlete is involved with a relay. We strongly encourage attendance because consistent training is how athletes improve. If we have advance notice, coaches will provide workouts to families to do on their own if they need to miss practice and don't want to fall behind in training.

How many meets are there?

We compete in three core USA Track and Field Junior Olympics meets per season: an Association meet (fairly local) a Regional meet (somewhere in North Idaho, Oregon or Washington), and a National meet (anywhere in the country). The meets are progressive, meaning an athlete needs to compete in one to qualify for the next. We add additional meets to our calendar if they become available and there is interest from our athletes.

Can I continue practicing if I don't qualify for the next meet?

Yes! We welcome and encourage all our athletes to continue working out with us through the end of each season regardless of whether or not they are competing.

How much does it cost?

Registration for Running Club is \$250, and this includes registration for all our seasons throughout the year, both Track and Cross Country. The cost of other seasons is as follows:

Track Extended Season	\$150 (Includes regular season)
Track Regular Season	\$120
XC Extended Season	\$180 (Includes regular season)
XC Regular Season	\$120
XC Post High School	\$80

Uniforms can be either rented for \$10 per season or purchased for \$30. We try not to change uniforms very often to keep costs down for participants

All athletes must purchase a USATF card for \$20 prior to practicing or competing.

Travel and meet entry fees are the responsibility of families. If our parent group chooses to do fundraisers, all money generated through fundraising is used to help our athletes travel to meets.

We never turn an athlete away from participating because of inability to pay.

How do I sign up?

We are old fashioned! Please go to our website at www.spokaneyouthdistance.org to print the registration form. Either bring it to your first practice or mail it to the address on the form.

How long is each season?

*See table below.

How can parents help out?

As part of registration a variety of volunteer opportunities is made available to parents. All coaches are volunteers outside of Mercury, and we greatly appreciate the help our parents provide.

When are the meets?

Please see our website for the most current information available about meet dates and locations. www.spokaneyouthdistance.org

*Season	Date Range	Days & Times	Locations
Extended Track Season	Mid March to the end of July	-Sundays only until mid April (4:00-5:00) -Sundays (4:00-5:00) and Tuesdays (6:00-7:00) Mid April through end of May -Sundays (4:00-5:00), Tuesdays (6:00-7:30), and Thursdays (6:00-7:30) end of May until end of July	All practices at Manito Park until the end of May Hart Field track (pending availability) on Tuesdays and Thursdays end of May until end of July; Manito Park on Sundays
Regular Season Track	End of May to end of July	-Sundays (4:00-5:00), Tuesdays (6:00-7:30), and Thursdays (6:00-7:30) end of May until end of July	Hart Field track (pending availability) on Tuesdays and Thursdays; Manito Park on Sundays
Extended Season Cross Country	Mid September to beginning of December	-Sundays (4:00-5:00), Tuesdays (6:00-7:30), and Thursdays (6:00-7:30) mid September to beginning of December	All practices at Manito Park until about the end of October; switch to Riverfront Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays around November first; Sundays always at Manito
Regular Season Cross Country	Mid October to beginning of December (typically kids start when their school season ends)	-Sundays (4:00-5:00), Tuesdays (6:00-7:30), and Thursdays (6:00-7:30) mid October to beginning of December	All practices at Manito Park until about the end of October; switch to Riverfront Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays around November first; Sundays always at Manito
Post High School Cross Country	Begin with Mercury as soon as your high school season ends; Junior Varsity seasons typically end in October; varsity seasons typically end at the beginning of November	-Sundays (4:00-5:00), Tuesdays (6:00-7:30), and Thursdays (6:00-7:30) mid October to beginning of December	All practices at Manito Park until about the end of October; switch to Riverfront Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays around November first; Sundays always at Manito