

West Broward's 2021 Cross Country Teams celebrate a remarkable season
Highlights from the Varsity Cross Country teams' achievements at Districts, Regionals, and States.

By Mariana De Jesus



FROM STRIDES TO SMILES: (From left to right) Head coach Ben Hodgers, the boys' varsity cross country team and assistant coach Anne Lambert stand next to the girls' varsity team and team manager Savana Hodgers (bottom right) posed for a photo after the 2021 District's race.

The cross country teams' hard work paid off as the boy's cross country teams qualified at the state competition in Tallahassee and the Girls team qualified for regionals in Broward County.

Photo courtesy of Lourdes Lawrence

Since the end of June 2021, both girls' and boys' cross country teams had been training in preparation for the competitive meets that would take place throughout the season. With the combination of each player having a winning mindset and new first-time runners joining the Bobcat Cross Country family, the teams exceeded their expectations for the season with their recent accomplishments.

After the District Race at Markham Park on Oct. 26, both teams competed and succeeded in qualifying for the Regional Competition that would take place on the following Wednesday on Nov. 3 at Larry And Penny Thompson Memorial Park. Despite their hard work, the season ended for the girls' varsity team at the Regional Competition. However, after placing second at districts and fifth at the regionals, the boys' varsity team continued their qualifying streak by advancing to the States Competition at Apalachee Regional Park, Tallahassee, FL on Nov. 12. This will be the first year in West Broward's history that the boys' varsity cross country team will be competing at the State level.

"We are definitely hoping for improvement at the competitions with the people who have been out here already, and with all the newcomers that have done really well," said assistant coach for both varsity teams Anne Lambert. "My expectations have been surpassed in a lot of areas this year.

A goal for runners is making personal records and improving their times throughout the season. With constant preparation and practice, the girls' varsity XC team strived for this goal. Accompanied by their improvement throughout the season, their eligibility to run at the Regionals race on Nov.3 relied on how well they performed at Districts on Oct.26. The girls qualified for Regionals after placing as a top 8 team with a composite score of 388 points showcasing their hard work and determination.

"Since summer conditioning, everyone has improved a lot. Everyone's times have gone down and are definitely better than where they were at the beginning of the season, especially with people coming in with no experience," said junior girls' varsity captain Loralai Lambert.

“Qualifying for regionals was really surprising because I did not think we were going to get the score and improve this much, but we did and I am really proud of everyone.”

Qualifying for Regionals meant a lot to the girls and the coaches since they had another chance to run together once more as a team before the season ended. Having faced competitive teams at Regionals like Braddock High School who finished first place with a total of 26 points and Coral Reef High School who finished in second place with a total of 94 points, the girls' varsity team finished off their season placing fourteenth out of sixteen schools with an average time of 25:54. The first distance runner for West Broward High School to cross the finish line for her team, senior Nicole Pazmino placed 47 out of 110. This was her personal best time for the season at 24:02.

“It felt good that all the work paid off and that we got here as a team,” Pazmino said. “I hope that new people find passion in the sport continuing the bond and tradition and that everyone continues working hard.”

Training alongside the girls' varsity team throughout the year, the 2021 Boys' varsity XC team had a significant running season and consistently improved in their times. Putting their practice into play, the boys placed second at the District race and qualified for Regionals with a composite score of 514 points. Following their success at districts, the boys' earned a composite score of 371 points with an average time of 18:40 at Regionals. Many runners achieved their personal record times (PR) at the race. Sophomore Carson Tolbert had a PR of 18:13, junior Ethan Lawrence had a PR of 18:19, senior Jonathon Charles had a PR of 18:52, and junior Evan Alvarez had a PR of 22:17. For the first time in 13 years, thanks to their dedication and perseverance, the team became the first boys' varsity XC team to qualify for States.

“Since we passed regionals, we are going to states now in Tallahassee so I am very excited,” said junior varsity boys' captain Ethan Lawrence. “It feels pretty good to qualify for states, especially being the first boy's team for Cross Country as a collective to make it to states.”

On Nov.12 at Apalachee Regional Park, Tallahassee, FL, the boys varsity team competed against 32 teams at the State meet. They placed 30 with a composite score of 792 points. Being the first runner to cross the finish line for the team, senior Ryan Dannelly placed 83 with a PR of 17:17 while sophomore Carson Tolbert improved his time once more after coming in 141 with a new PR of 17:58. Both varsity teams had a successful and eventful running season that is connected to their preparation and dedication to the sport. The teams displayed their determination both at practice and at the meets, consistently working towards improvement and having earned themselves a victorious running season.

“I’m absolutely happy with the progress the teams have made this year,” said head coach Ben Hodgers. “Our new runners that came out that were not on the team last year made it a much better team all around.”