FIREBIRDS

ParenT HANDBOOK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS and TRACK MEET ESSENTIALS



For the

*Outdoor and Indoor* Track Seasons

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

1. What age can my child join the Club?
2. What are the three (3) main goals of the Club?
3. What is the Club’s contact number and website information?
4. What are the days and times for practice?
5. How can I help my child prepare for practice?
6. What are the rules for practice and track meets?
7. How will I know when practice or track meets are cancelled?
8. How do I obtain a uniform for my athlete?
9. What are the age divisions?
10. What is a meet and what are Timed Trials?
11. How long is the track season?
12. Do you have parent meetings and when are the parent meetings held?
13. When are the track meets held?
14. What time do the track meets typically start?
15. What time should we arrive and why does the team have to be at the Meet so early?
16. What time are the Meets normally over?
17. Where are the Meets held?
18. How will I know where to go for the Meets?
19. How do I know what events my child will compete in?
20. What should I know about preparing the night before a Meet and the morning of the Meet?
21. What things should I bring on the day of the meet?
22. How do I get my child’s awards and medals?
23. During the meet, if my child’s events are over, can we leave?
24. What are the events at the track meet?
25. What is a “HEAT” and why is it so important?
26. How do you determine if my child made the FINALS?
27. What are Qualifying Meets?
28. What Qualifying Meets does the Club normally attend?
29. What does PVA means?
30. What is a BIB Number?
31. How can I help the Club or volunteer?
32. What age can my child join the Club?

Firebird Track Club members range in age from 6 to 18 years old (18 years old not turning 19 years old before August 1, of the current year). Age group is just as the name implies: Track and Field competition based on an athlete’s age in the current calendar year (as of December 31st).

1. What are the three (3) main goals of the Club?

The three main goals of the Firebirds Track Club are:

* To successfully train and develop all our youth to become more knowledgeable about track and field and to reach his or her optimal achievement level of competition.
* To promote the importance of academic success and support our athletes to prepare them to compete in the classroom as well as on the track.
* To reduce obesity by getting kids moving toward an active lifestyle, focusing on proper nutrition, and conditioning.

1. What is the Club’s contact and website information?

Firebirds Website: [www.FirebirdsTrackClub.com](http://www.FirebirdsTrackClub.com) (important phone numbers, important news, club history and info, forms, schedules, etc.

Firebirds Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/372661251249236> (social media page for connecting with current athletes, parents, alumni and the community and fundraising).

Firebirds Instagram Page: <https://www.instagram.com/firebirdstrack/> social media page for connecting with current athletes, parents, alumni and the community and fundraising).

TeamSnap: The Firebirds TeamSnap app is the primary method by which the Club provides information about schedule of practices and meets, notice of parent meetings, cancellation of practice, meets and location changes, and general communications.

.

1. What are the days and times for practice?

Outdoor Season: Our normal practices are held every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Unforeseen circumstances may cause practice to be rescheduled at different times. Any changes will be communicated through TeamSnap.

Indoor Season: Our normal practices are held Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings/afternoons. Unforeseen circumstances may cause practice to be rescheduled at different times. Any changes will be communicated through TeamSnap.

1. How can I help my child prepare for practice?

Food: Athletes should eat two hours before practice. If athletes eat less than two hours before practice, this may result in digesting problems.

Clothing: Athletes should come to practice in comfortable workout clothing/sporting attire (sweat pants, long sleeve shirts, light jackets or sweaters for cooler weather) suitable for running. No jeans, jean shorts or pants allowed during practice.

Running Shoes: Our athletes’ feet are very important to their success. If they are wearing the wrong type of shoes, it will cause foot/leg/ankle/heel and/or hip problems. For track season, all athletes are required to practice in running shoes, not basketball, crocs or casual shoes. The proper running shoes are designed to protect the feet from all of the injuries noted above.

A black and white shoe

Description automatically generated with low confidence 

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YES** | **NO** |

Spike Shoes: Spike Shoes are needed for every track meet; all athletes are encouraged to run in spike shoes referred to as “spikes”. Spike shoes have holes in the sole that accommodate metal replacement spikes. The maximum spike length allowed for running track and field events are ¼” Pyramids. There are spikes made for different events (shorter distance/sprinter; long distance; field event), so please purchase the proper spikes for your child’s events. If you have questions about purchasing spikes (sizing, fitting, type, etc.), you may see one of the Firebirds coaches or staff for assistance. We recommend that purchase your child’s spikes within the first two weeks of the outdoor season. Please be aware that inventory shortages and shipping delays are common at the beginning of the outdoor season. Parents of young athletes should check their child’s spikes after every few meets to determine if they need to replace the spikes in the spike shoe. Please also purchase an extra bag of spike replacements ( ¼ “ Pyramids) to have on hand to replace in your athlete’s spike shoes as needed.

A picture containing sport, footwear

Description automatically generated

Health: Due to the strenuous nature of some activities, Parents are urged to have their child consult with their physician concerning his/her fitness to participate. If the athlete has had a change in their physical condition at any time during the season, such as illness, injury or hospitalization, then Parents are asked to let the Coaches know as soon as possible. Any of these conditions can be made worse due to the strenuous nature of some of the activities that are involved with track and field and can affect an athlete’s performance at practice or meets. It is important to always keep athletes healthy.

Hydration: Water, water, water, we cannot stress enough the importance of drinking enough water and being well hydrated to participate in practice and meets. We recommend your child drink water throughout the day: at least three to four (3-4) 16.9 fluid ounces before 4:00pm on the days that they come to practice and lots of water throughout the day during meets. Hydration is critically important for safety and health each day, but especially so on practice and meet days. As the season progresses and the weather gets warmer, hydration is extremely important to help avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

A group of water bottles

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Gatorade/Powerade: May be used during the track meets. Gatorade and Powerade are good but should be monitored to make sure they are being used properly. These drinks are meant to replenish the electrolytes that have been lost through perspiration Pedialyte, Liquid IV are believed to be better electrolyte replacements with less sugar that Gatorade and Powerade.

Energy Drinks (Monster, Red Bull, 5-Hour Energy, Rock Star, etc.): The Firebirds strongly discourages the consumption of Sports/Energy Drinks and/or soda as a form of hydration for our athletes. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/are-energy-drinks-for-kids-a-good-idea/>

General Nutrition. The Firebirds Track Club encourages our athletes to eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables and to begin hydrating their body through water consumption no less than two hours prior to practice. The Club also encourages consumption of water during and after practice and competition.

1. What are the rules for practice and track meets?

General Guidelines:

* Please make sure your contact information (including cell phone number) is updated in the TeamSnap app in the event of an emergency and the Club needs to contact a parent or other emergency contact.
* Athletes must be on time for practice and meets.
* If an athlete is planning to be absent during practice, the parent or athlete should notify the Club via TeamSnap of his/her absence.
* If the athlete is unbale to attend a track meet, the athlete should note their attendance in the TeamSnap app prior to the deadline for meet registration. Unexcused absences from meets may result in the athlete being excluded from future competitions.
* If an athlete is arrives late to practice, the athlete should see one of the assistant coaches to properly warm up before joining the team practice.
* Children 12 and under should be picked up by their parents from the track at the conclusion of practice. The team prohibits young athletes from leaving on their own and meeting parents in the parking lot for safety reasons. Children younger than 12 may leave the track with an older sibling who is an athlete on the team.
* The athlete and parent MUST each read, sign and submit the Firebirds Code of Conduct during the registration period. The athlete and parents may also refer to the Code of Conduct throughout the track season.
* The athlete’s name should be marked on ALL pieces of their track equipment (clothing, shoes/spikes, book bags / bags) and clearly marked at practice and at the track meets.
* At the track meets, the athletes should keep their warmups on when they are not competing in their events. This will keep their muscles warm and prevent injuries. If they remove their warmup tops, they should have on their long sleeve t-shirts or a pullover to keep their upper body warm.
* At the track meets, when the athletes are not competing in their events, the athletes MUST stay together under the team tent and out of the sun. This will help preserve their energy for their race or field event. This is alos a safety requirement so the coaches and staff know where our athletes are at all times.
* Please make sure you have alerted the coaching staff of any chronic health concerns that we should be aware of concerning your athletes (asthma, allergies of any type, new colds or sicknesses, and new or old injuries). You should also include this information on the forms provided during registration. All of these can affect the athlete’s performance. If your athlete regularly takes medication for a medical condition, please make sure that the medication is available for your athlete on days of practice and track meets. Our primary goal is to ensure that athletes remain healthy.
* During the track meets, the bleachers and Firebirds tent are reserved for the athletes and coaches first. Parents/Guardians should not ask the athletes to move to other locations and should not remove the athlete’s belongings from under the bleachers or under the tent. Parents/Guardians may be seated in this area if there is enough space after the athletes and coaches have been seated.
* At practices and at the track meets, athletes and parents should help keep the area clean and free of trash.

1. How will I know when practice or track meets are cancelled?

The Firebirds coaches and staff will update the TeamSnap app and send a chat message and email through TeamSnap. It is always a good idea to check the TeamSnap app prior to leaving for practice during suspected inclement weather. During thunderstorms, the Club will suspend practice and find appropriate shelter until there is an all clear from any lightning strikes. If practice is cancelled due to repeated lighting strikes, the Club will notify Parents through the TeamSnap app. Athletes will not be dismissed until a Parent has picked them up.

PLEASE NOTE: Track and field events are routinely held during the rain. Competition or practice is only suspended or cancelled for lightning strikes.

1. How do I obtain a uniform for my athlete?

The Firebirds uniform consist of five pieces (a compression top, compression shorts, long sleeve T-shirt, warmup top and warmup bottoms). Uniforms are typically purchased during the registration process. Please refer to the Firebirds website for uniform information.

1. What are the age divisions?

* 8 & Under (Girls/Boys)
* 9/10 (Girls/Boys)
* 11/12 (Girls/Boys)
* 13/14 (Girls/Boys)
* 15/16 (Girls/Boys)
* 17/18 (Men/Women)

1. What is a meet and what are Timed Trials?

A Meet (Track Meet) is a track and field competition held between two or more track teams.

A Time Trial is just what it is, a Timed Trial.

1. How long is the track season?

Outdoor Season: For *non-high school athletes*, practice for the outdoor season begins the first week of April and run through late June. The first track meet of the season is typically held on the first Saturday in May. Every non-high school athlete will have the opportunity to participate in all the local track meets (Baltimore/DC Metro area) which are usually held every Saturday and limited to occasional Sundays from May to June. Please keep in mind, track meets require a full day commitment from athletes and parents.

*High school athletes* join the team in May at the conclusion of their high school outdoor track season and have the opportunity to compete in all local track meets (Baltimore/DC Metro area) after their high school season ends. As noted above, track meets are usually held every Saturday and limited to occasional Sundays from May to June. Qualifying meets will typically start in June and run through July. Through qualifying meets, the coaches attempt to get as many athletes qualified for national championship meets. The team goes to either the USATF or the AAU championship meet held the last week of July or first week of August.

Indoor Season: The Indoor season starts in mid-November and runs through March. The indoor season ends the first week of March with the AAU National Championship Meet typically held in Virginia Beach, VA. The team attends a limited amount of meets during the Indoor Season. High School athletes do not compete with the Club during the Indoor season unless their school does not provide an indoor high school track season.

1. Do you have parent meetings and when are the parent meetings held?

We have parent meeting in the beginning of the season to welcome all new and returning families. As the competition season progresses, we will have parent meeting weekly to provide pertinent information about the upcoming Saturday meet.

1. When are the track meets held?

Outdoor Season: Meets are scheduled on Saturdays and occasionally on Sundays. The Qualifying Meet are usually scheduled for three to four (3-4) days, usually Thursday through Sunday. Please refer to the information below regarding the Qualifying Meets.

Indoor Season: Meets are scheduled on Saturdays and occasionally on Sunday. The AAU National Championship Meet is scheduled for three (3) days Friday through Sunday.

1. What time do the track meets typically start?

Outdoor Season: The outdoor track meets usually start at 8:00am. Specific information will also be provided in the weekly parents meeting during the practice.

Indoor Season: The indoor track meets usually start at 8:30 – 9:00am. Specific information

1. What time should we arrive and why does the team have to be at the Meet so early?

Athletes should arrive to the meet location at least one hour before the meet is scheduled to start.

This allows:

* The athlete time to properly warm up before the meet begins. The track is open to all teams during this period to warm up and will close at some period prior to the first event on the track.
* Time for the athlete to receive their race bib and get other important instructions regarding the meet.
* The coaches time to change the planned schedule if an athlete is unable to attend the meet that particular day due to an emergency.
* The coaches time to make changes to the relay teams if necessary. It is critical that the coaches know who is coming to the meet, especially those athletes participating on the relay teams. The team pays the registration fee for each athlete and relay team participating in the meet. If a relay team is missing an athlete due to an unexpected emergency, arriving early allows the coaches to make substitutions easily depending upon availability. The Club will lose the monies paid for athletes and relay teams unable to compete. Further, depending on the age, some athletes are only allowed to participate in 3 or 4 events. Therefore, if the coaches are required to make changes to the relay teams, it can possibly alter the entire schedule to make these adjustments

In short, it is extremely important that we demonstrate responsibility. Our kids will not be responsible if it is not displayed through US. Our goals is to teach them responsibility, preparedness and readiness and they will need to see us set that example for them.

1. What time are the Meets normally over?

Outdoor Season: The outdoor track meets can last anywhere from 5:00pm to 8:00pm. The time depends upon the number of teams participating in the Meet and how well the meets are run by the officials and the hosting team.

Indoor Season: The indoor track meets are usually over by 3:00pm

\*\*NOTE: The Junior Olympic Meets and Other Qualifying Meets are all omn a timed schedule.

1. Where are the Meets held?

Outdoor Season: The outdoor track meets are held at local area high schools and colleges in the Metropolitan Washington and Baltimore areas. Many meets are also held at the Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex in Landover, Maryland. The Qualifying Meets are typically held at colleges or stadiums in or out of town. Specific information will be provided at the weekly parents meeting.

Indoor Season: The indoor track meets are typically held at the Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex in Landover, Maryland or at the Virginia Beach Sport Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

1. How will I know where to go for the Meets?

The meet location will always be included in the TeamSnap app and specific information will be provided during the weekly parent meeting.

1. How do I know what events my child will compete in?

The coaches will email out an event spreadsheet each week showing the events that your athletes is registered to compete.

1. What should I know about preparing the night before a Meet and the morning of the Meet?

The Night Before the Meet: It is important that the athletes start the process of cleansing impurities in their system from the various foods they have consumed during the week. It is imperative that an athlete is light on their feet simply because it produces better results. Athletes are to eat a healthy dinner that’s high in good carbohydrates and protein. Examples: Pasta (spaghetti or any other pasta, baked chicken, pasta salad, etc.). \*\*\*\*ABSOLUTELY NO FRIED FOODS, PLEASE!!! The athletes should also check to make sure they have their complete uniforms, track equipment/supplies, track bag, running shoes, spikes, spike replacements in their spike shoes, etc.

The athletes should also get proper rest. This may be a challenge for a lot of kids, but it is also important that our athletes have the proper amount oif rest in order to perform well the next day at the meet. All athletes should be in bed no later than 10:00 – 10:30pm the night before the meet.

The Day of the Meet: Every athlete should eat breakfast prior to a competition. Running on an empty stomach will result in poor performance results. Some food to eat for breakfast: Breakfast Bars; Cereal Grain Bars (no cereal with milk), Nutri Grain Bars, Pancakes, Bagels, Fruits, etc.). \*\*\*\*ABSOLUTELY NO FRIED FOODS, PLEASE!!! You may alos refer to the “Track Meet Essential Quick Reference” sheet found on the last page of this packet for a list of additional food choices. Again, the athletes should also check to make sure they have their complete uniform, track equipment/supplies, track bag, running shoes, spikes, spike replacements in their spike shoes, etc

1. What things should I bring on the day of the meet?

It is a long day at the track meet. Please bring items that will allow you and your athlete to be comfortable. In addition to your athlete’s uniform and track supplies, you should consider bring the following items for your comfort:

Lots of water, Gatorade; Pedialyte, fruits, pretzels, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, crackers, raisins, tuna, granola bars, cooler, wagon, portable chairs and/or seat cushions, insect repellant, hand towels, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, lotion, deodorant, inhalers, prescribed medicines, sun visors/sun hats, ponytail holders, water misting fans, athletic support in form of cup, jock strap or compression shorts underneath the male uniform, sports bra if needed, female personal items, trash bags, tent (optional), umbrella, sun block lotion, sunglasses, light jacket, books, games, portable games, etc.

1. How do I get my child’s awards and medals?

Any medals won for competition during the meets will be distributed during practice.

1. During the meet, if my child’s events are over, can we leave?

As a Club, we strongly encourage everyone to stay until the end of the track meet. This displays team unity and shows support for ALL our athletes, not just your child. If a parent absolutely has to leave during the course of the Meet, of course we understand. We just ask that the parents communicates this to the coaching staff and make preparations for your child to stay, if necessary.

1. What are the events at the track meet?

An Outdoor Track is 400 meters (double the size of a typical indoor track)

SPRINTS

50 Meters – 50m distance on the straightaway section of the track (Usually for younger athletes)

100 Meters – 100m distance on the straightaway section of the track

200 Meters – Halfway around the track from the curve to the finish line

400 Meters – 1 whole lap around the track

MIDDLE DISTANCE:

800 Meters – 2 whole laps around the track’

1500 Meters – 3 & 2/3 laps around the track

3000 Meters – 7½ laps around the track

5000 Meters Race Walk – 12.5 laps around the track

HURDLES:

80m Hurdles – 8 Hurdles over 80 meters

100m Hurdles – 10 Hurdles over 100 meters

110m Hurdles – 10 Hurdles over 110 meters

400m Hurdles – 1 whole lap around the track, athlete stays in their lane the entire race after starting out of the blocks and must clear ten hurdles that are evenly spaced around the track

RELAYS:

4x100 Meter Relay – 4 athletes run in lanes over one lap of the track each covering 100 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

4x400 Meter Relay – 4 athletes run one complete lap of the track each covering 400 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

4x800 Meter Relay – 4 athletes run two complete laps of the track each covering 800 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

FIELD EVENTS (THROWING):

Shot Put – Athletes compete to push a heavy metal ball as far possible; the winner is the athlete who has the longest throw.

Hammer Throw – Athletes complete by throwing a heavy metal ball attached to a handle of flexible wire as far they can; the winner is the athlete who has the longest throw.

Turbo Javelin – (ages 8-12) Athletes compete by throwing an object known as a javelin, a spear-like object made of metal and fiber glass, the winner is the athlete who has the longest throw.

Javelin - (ages 13-18) Athletes compete by throwing an object known as a javelin, a spear-like object made of metal and fiber glass, the winner is the athlete who has the longest throw.

Discuss – Athletes compete by throwing a heavy disc called a discus in an attempt to mark a farther distance than his/her competitors.

FIELD EVENTS (JUMPING):

High Jump – Athletes run forward to gain momentum and then jump over a horizontal bar. The bar is raised higher in each successive round. The athlete with the highest jump wins the competition.

Pole Vault – Athletes compete by using a long, flexible pole as an aid to leap over a horizontal bar. The bar is raised higher in each successive round. The athlete with the highest leap wins the competition.

Long Jump – Athletes jump for distance from a running start into a sandpit. The winner is the athlete with the longest jump.

Triple Jump – Athletes perform a short run and three consecutive jumps landing first on one foot, then the opposite foot, and finally both feet, in continuous motion. The winner is the athlete with the longest jump.

An Indoor Track is 200 meters (half the size of an outdoor track)

SPRINTS

55 Meters – 55m distance on the straightaway section or infield of the track

200 Meters – 1 whole lap around the track

400 Meters – 2 whole laps around the track

MIDDLE DISTANCE:

800 Meters – 4 whole laps around the track

1500 Meters – 7½ whole laps around the track

1600 Meters – 8 whole laps around the track

HURDLES:

55m Hurdles – 5 Hurdles over 55 meters

80m Hurdles – (ages 11-12) 8 Hurdles over 80 meters

100m Hurdles – (ages 13-14) 10 Hurdles over 100 meters

RELAYS:

4x200 Meter Relay – 4 athletes run in lanes over one lap of the track each covering 200 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

4x400 Meter Relay – 4 athletes each run two complete lap of the track each covering 400 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

4x800 Meter Relay – 4 athletes each run four complete laps of the track each covering 800 meters before passing a baton to the next relay team member.

FIELD EVENTS (THROWING):

Shot Put – Athletes compete to push a heavy metal ball as far possible; the winner is the athlete who has the longest throw.

FIELD EVENTS (JUMPING):

High Jump – Athletes run forward to gain momentum and then jump over a horizontal bar. The bar is raised higher in each successive round. The athlete with the highest jump wins the competition.

Long Jump – Athletes jump for distance from a running start into a sandpit. The winner is the athlete with the longest jump.

1. What is a “HEAT” and why is it so important?

All races are run in “Heats”. Heats are sets of athletes within the same age division/group that compete. The number of heats is determined by the number of athletes in each age group as a whole.

For example, using an eight (8) lane track, there are fifty-six (56) girls in the 9/10 age group, then you will have seven (7) heats total with eight (8) girls competing in each heat. The first place winner in each particular heat is the winner of that heat only but NOT the overall the 9/10 girls age group. The winners (1st – 8th places) are determined by the athletes that had the FASTEST TIMES OVERALL, after all the heats have been run.

1. How do you determine if my child made the FINALS?

This is determined by the top eight (8) FASTEST TIMES within that particular age group in local meets or as prescribed in the rules for advancement in the qualifying meets, again once all the heats have been run. The selected athletes then compete in the FINALS. Final competitions are only done for the 100 meter dashes during the invitational meets. During the qualifying meets all the events have final competitions.

1. What are Qualifying Meets?

During the Qualifying Meets, your child will now be competing in order to move on (or advance) to the next level of competition. If your child does not meet the qualifying standard, they will not be able to advance to the next more competitive meet. These are mandatory meets and athletes must participate in each of these to advance to the next level.

1. What is a BIB Number?

At each meet, your child will be issued a paper with his/her assigned race number. The number is used to identify the athlete throughout the entire meet. The athlete will use safety pins to attach the race bib number to their competition shirt. For multiple day meets, the athlete will be required to wear the same bib number and must retain the bib for all days of the competition. Loss or inadvertently discarding the bib typically requires a replacement cost to be paid by the parents. The bib number is also used in many meets for the athletes to gain free admission to the track meet.

1. Does it cost to attend my athlete’s track meets?

Most track meets require spectators above a certain age to purchase tickets. Athletes competing in the meet will not need to purchase spectator tickets. Information about links to purchase spectator tickets will be provided at the weekly parent meetings.

1. How can I help the Club or volunteer?

All coaches and staff are volunteers and welcome the support and assistance of Parent Volunteers. There are numerous opportunities to assist with the operations of the Club. We will provide additional information about volunteer opportunities at the parent meetings.