

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STRIDERS YOUTH MEETS

1. **Who sponsors the meets?** The New Jersey Striders sponsor the meets which have been held since 1977. There are over fifteen participating towns affiliated with the Striders, plus a few independent teams and independent athletes at the meets. Some of the meets have over 800 athletes.
2. **When are the meets held?** The meets are held every Sunday afternoon at different Bergen County sites from mid-April until early June except for Mothers Day and Memorial Day weekend which are off-weeks. All meets start at 1 PM except for the Junior Olympic meet (usually the next to last one) which starts at Noon. The meets end about 5 PM.
3. **Must my child attend?** Only a few members of the team attend all six meets. Some attend only one or two meets, some attend more. We ask that your child attend at least two meets to experience the fun! It is up to you and all depends on what you want to get out of the program. For all six meets, the Wood-Ridge Striders pay the entry fees for all its members who attend.
4. **What are the directions to the meet sites?** Go to <http://www.njstriders.com> for directions to each site.
5. **What time should we get there?** We suggest trying to get there a bit early since parking varies at each site. Depending on the events your athlete is entering, you do not have to stay the entire meet. Some families come early & leave early, some come late & leave late, and some stay for the entire meet. Keep in mind that the relay is usually the last event.
6. **What if the weather is bad?** Only one meet in the past decade has been cancelled entirely. Use your discretion about whether you want to attend in less than optimal conditions. Sometimes, the meet will be shortened if there is bad weather. Some field events and the hurdles may be cancelled if there is rain because of safety considerations, but usually there will be at least a few track events in the rain for the die-hards. Much depends on the particular site. Of course, the meet stops immediately in case of lightning.
7. **What should the athletes wear?** All Wood-Ridge team members should wear their track uniforms for identification. Prior to the first meet, each athlete will get a competitor's number to pin on the front of the shirt. This same number is used for all six meets, so do not lose it. The NJ Striders may charge \$5.00 for a replacement number. Otherwise athletes should dress according to the weather conditions. They may wear tights or sweatpants in cold or bad weather, turtlenecks under their t-shirts, hats gloves, etc. (One exception is that knees must be showing in the racewalk events for the judges to view the walking form.) Footwear should be running flats or sneakers. No spikes are allowed.

8. **What should we bring?** Some suggestions: (1) sunscreen for sunny days, (2) water, especially in warm weather, (3) other refreshments if you do not want to use the concession stands, and (4) cameras to take video or still pictures.
9. **Where do we go when we get to the site?** The Wood-Ridge team usually sets up in the grandstands somewhere in the area of the homestretch. There will be a Wood-Ridge coach at that location. Look for the Wood-Ridge Track banner, we may have a tent set up depending on weather conditions.
10. **How do we know when an athlete checks in for an event?** The meet will make calls for the events on the loudspeakers. The Coaches will be in contact with each other via walkie talkies to prompt athletes when their events are being called and directing them where to go. Other Wood-Ridge Coaches will be floating around the site as needed.
11. **What is the schedule?** Go to <http://www.njstriders.com> for the order of events for each meet which varies each week. Not every event is offered every week.
12. **What events will my child compete in?** Unlike Little League, soccer, basketball, etc., the athletes and parents decide what they want to do, and nobody sits on the bench. And you can decide on the spot. The coaches will offer suggestions. Athletes under 13 years old are restricted to a maximum of three events. Athletes who turn 13 or older this year are permitted a maximum of four events. We generally suggest trying one track event, one field event, and one relay event each week, but some athletes like to specialize on the track, or in the field. We will try to set up relays in advance to ensure we have four willing athletes for a full relay team.
13. **What if my child wants to compete in a track event and a field event that are being held simultaneously?** Generally, the track event gets priority. The athlete should tell the field event official who normally excuses an athlete until the track event is done, and the athlete can then usually return to complete the field event.
14. **What are the age-groups?** The age-groups are based on the calendar year of birth, not the athlete's scholastic grade. With very limited exceptions, an athlete must only compete in his or her age group. The age groups are:
 - Athletes who turn 7 or 8 on their 2012 birthdays are Sub-Bantams;
 - Athletes who turn 9 or 10 on their 2012 birthdays are Bantams;
 - Athletes who turn 11 or 12 on their 2012 birthdays Midgets; and
 - Athletes who turn 13 or 14 on their 2012 birthdays are Youths.
15. **Can parents go on the track or infield?** No, even most of the coaches are limited to the grandstands. And athletes are only allowed on the track or infield when their events have been called or are in progress.

16. **What about awards?** Every athlete gets at least an honorable mention ribbon for completing each event. Athletes who finish among the top six boys or top six girls in an age group in an event get special ribbons. At the last meet, medals are given to the top three in each event. Note that there may be multiple heats of a track event and the place ribbons or medals are given to only the overall best times for all the heats combined in a particular age group. Ribbons for Wood-Ridge athletes are given out at the end of our next practice after each meet, or mailed if an athlete can't make that practice.
17. **What about results?** They are computerized and available and archived on the Striders website by the next day. Every competitor's number is in a computer database and results are entered in laptop computers with special software in the press box as meet progresses. Sometimes, results are posted on a wall during a meet.
18. **Is there a team score?** No, there is not a team score. The competition is about each individual athlete doing his or her best and trying to improve as the year progresses. And, of course, there are relays which provide a team aspect in the meets.
19. **Do the Striders need a copy of a birth certificate for each athlete?** We need one if that athlete wishes to compete in the Junior Olympic qualifying meet which is held in Rutherford. We will have more information about the Junior Olympics later in the year.
20. **What do I do if there is a problem at the meet?** Tell a coach as soon as possible. The coaches are acting as representatives of the team and can resolve a problem more quickly than an individual parent or athlete.
21. **Anything else?** Pray for good weather!

TERMINOLOGY YOU MAY NEED TO KNOW:

Track: a surface made of rubber and is usually 400 meters long.

Track lanes: boundaries marked with white lines that range from 36" wide, to 48" wide, depending on the facility.

The following races are run in lanes for our developmental series, and the athlete must stay in their lane at all times. If they take three steps in a row outside of their lane, they can be disqualified.

100M (meters): a sprint down a straightaway of the track

200M: ½ of a lap

400M: one lap

The following races do not have a lane assignment. The athletes line up on the starting line, and are then allowed to cut over to the inside lanes designated by the official, and when they have achieved a one stride lead.

800M: two laps

1500M: 3.75 laps, and is known as the metric mile. A mile is actually 1609 meters, or four full laps.

3000M: 7 ½ laps

Shot put: a round steel ball that weighs 6 lbs for 9-12 yr olds & 13-14 yr old girls
The 13-14 yr old boys use a 4kg (8.8lbs)

Discus: like a weighted frisbee

Turbo javelin: a developmental level spear training tool plastic modified (for safety) that is made especially for young competitors.

High jump: a parallel crossbar that is jumped over from one foot, landing on three foam mats placed behind the stance.

Long Jump: a sprint down a straightaway jumping off a white board into a sandpit.

Racewalk: a fast walking race where the athlete must keep one foot on the ground at all times and also straighten their leg upon impact to the ground each time. (This race is judged)

Relays: four athletes run a percentage of the race and hand a 1-foot long aluminum tube (baton) to each other.

Starting blocks: metal foot pedals used by sprinters at the start of a race to assist in the push off.

Who wins a race: torso first! Arms or feet do not count.

Starting commands in races of 400M or less: On your marks, set, slight pause, then gun sound

Starting commands in races of 800M or longer: On your marks, slight pause, and then the gun sounds

ARE YOU A WINNING TRACK & FIELD PARENT?

If You Learn And Practice The Following Seven Keys To Becoming A Successful Track & Field Parent, Your Child Should Have A Successful And Rewarding Relationship With Track & Field.

Do You really want your children to have a rewarding and enjoyable experience with their athletics (track & field)?

Would you like your son or daughter to feel good about himself/herself and perform like champion? Do you know what it takes to be a winning athletics (track & field) parent?

Whether you know it or not, much of your child's success at the track rest squarely in your lap. That's Right! You are the most influential and important member of the coach-athlete-parent team. You have the power and ability to shape your child's relationship with this sport so that it brings him/her lasting joy, enduring self- confidence and self esteem-building success. In fact if you play your role on the team the right way, then you can help ensure that your child will go into the world feeling well adjusted, confident and happy long after he/she has hung up his/her competitive running shoes. It's an unfortunate fact of this sport that well-meaning parents all too often say and do the wrong things with their child-athlete under the guise of trying to be "helpful."

Attempting to motivate their children to go faster these parents instead inadvertently set them up for failure and unhappiness. They do this by unknowingly breaking all the rules of peak performance and, as a result, stresses their child, distract him/her from the task at hand and ensure that their son or daughter Always runs far slower than his/her abilities. If you truly want your child to have a successful and rewarding relationship with Athletics (Track & Field), then it's up to you to do your part. Learn and practice the following seven keys to becoming a winning Athletics (track & Field), parent.

1. DON'T COACH

Trying to "coach" your children behind the scenes when the team already has a professional staff will ultimately hurt your kids far more than it will help. As parent, it is not your job to coach either at practice or meets.

This means that you don't want to push your children to train harder or do extra workouts so that they can be better, quicker. You don't want to discuss form technique or race strategy with them before or after practice, on the way to the meet or right before the races. You don't want to subject them to last minute motivational talks. You should never offer helpful hints and criticism after their races even if you think you know exactly what went wrong. This is the coach's job, not yours! Your "helpful" hints in these are never helpful and will ultimately backfire! Coaching is the very last thing your children need from you when it comes to their Athletics (Track & Field). Winning Athletics (Track & Field) parents don't coach. Instead, they leave the coaching to the coaches.

2. BE UNCONDITIONALLY LOVING AND SUPPORTIVE

Your primary role on the “team” is to be your children’s “best fan.” You want to support their efforts and love them unconditionally regardless of how fast they run or in what place they finish. Whether they win or lose, run slow or fast, your love and respect for your children should never change. What you can do in your support role is to arrange for extra lessons for them if they ask, endlessly drive them to practices, cheer for them at their meets, make sure that they have nourishing, healthy food to eat and do

everything else that loving, supportive parents are suppose to do.

And you should do every bit of this without ever expecting or demanding any “return,” performance-wise, on your “investment” of all this time, money and energy.

3. DON'T PRESSURE YOUR CHILD TO FOCUS ON OUTCOME

Perhaps one of the more destructive things that you can do as a parent is to get your children worrying about how fast they run or the times that they need to achieve. When you do this, you will guarantee that they feel to pressured and distracted before their races to run to their potential. Going fast, achieving cuts and winning are always a paradox in running – that is, these goals can only happen if the runner focuses more on himself/herself and the process of the race, one stride at a time, and less on the races

outcome or their times Pressuring your kids to go fast is a great way to get them consistently to go slower!

4. HELP YOUR CHILDREN FOCUS ON THEMSELVES

Parents who continually emphasize to their children the importance of beating certain teammates or opponents inadvertently add to their children’s stress and actually contribute to their children underachieving. Runners can only go fast when they focus on what they are doing and not on what everyone else is doing. Comparing your children with others on the team or in the league is a great strategy if you’d like them to fail.

Instead encourage you runner to stay in their own lane focusing on their stride, form and race strategy and what they are doing.

5. KEEP THE SPORT IN PERSPECTIVE

Help your children understand that running is just a sport and is not larger than life. Teach them that the main purposes of their sport are to master new skills, feel good about themselves and *have fun*. Help them understand that if they have a bad race or meet, this does not mean that they are a bad person or a failure. Help them view their losses and setbacks as a normal and healthy part of the learning process and a necessary prerequisite to ultimate success. Remember, your children can only learn these lessons if you, as the adult, keep their running in the proper perspective.

6. DON'T BRIBE YOUR CHILDREN TO RUN, JUMP, THROW

Running should be something your children do because *they* want to do it. It's not your job to try and motivate them to go harder and reach for certain goals the goals and dreams that your children have at the track should be *their* goals and dreams *not yours!* Bribing your children to run with money and incentive gifts gives them the wrong message about the purpose of their sport, and ultimately serves as a de-motivator for them. Instead, encourage your children to take ownership of the sport and to run, jump, throw for themselves- because they like it, because it makes them feel good and because they have goals that they'd like to achieve.

7. BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL FOR YOUR CHILD

Keep in mind that how you conduct yourself in relation to your children's running provides them with very compelling and powerful on-going life lessons. This education starts with the comments that you make to them about their coach. It includes your treatment of their teammates and opponents before and after the races. It's strongly shaped by how you behave at meets, how you handle their setbacks and failures, and whether you're a good sport or not. Remember, your actions always speak louder than your words, and your children are constantly listening to every "word" that you say. Do you know exactly what life lessons you are modeling for your children? Remember, winning track & field Parents understand what's really at stake whenever their children get up to the starting line to race. It's not the race's outcome, trophy or medal or ribbon or track records that are important. It's not the qualifying times or a chance for a college scholarship that matters. What's really at stake here is your sons or daughter's long-term happiness and psychological well being, not to mention the health of your parent-child relationship. A winning track & field parent always keeps this in mind.

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY DR ALAN GOLDBERG, A SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANT