**RBXC 2014**

**Girls Cross Country**

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**A Message from the coaches…**

We just want to take this opportunity to thank all the athletes and parents for making the 2014 season of Cross Country truly memorable!

To all the athletes– Thank you for your continued dedication to our program. Without you, cross country would cease to be the successful fall team sport that it is! Our program continues to grow each year, and the memories get better and better. Thank you for working hard at practice and for encouraging your teammates. This team would not feel like such a family if it weren’t for the strong team bonds that are created when many individuals work together toward a common goal. We welcomed quite a bit of change this season, 2 new coaches and one coach in a new role. We lost a state champion and one of the toughest senior classes that we’ve had on Cross Country. This year’s seniors demonstrated great leadership and responded very positively to these changes—as a result, we had another wonderful season! Additionally, we welcomed a deep freshmen class, whose fun-loving personality infused the team with the perfect work hard/play hard mentality. To all the runners who plan on returning next year: continue to work hard, support each other, and share your love for cross country! Keep running during the off season so next year can be even better. We have the potential to be a very good team moving forward into the next several seasons!

To all the parents – Thank you for your support throughout the season. It is so amazing to see all of you out at the races encouraging the athletes. Also, we cannot thank you enough for all your help at RB Invite and IHSA Regionals. Without the parent volunteers these meets would not nearly be as successful. Parents truly are the backbone that holds the team together, and we are so appreciative of you! Continue to spread the word to the community about how great our program is so that we can build a strong tradition and keep parent involvement growing! Congratulations on a successful season and we can’t wait for next year!

Sincerely,

Brennan Denny John Izaguirre Alison Rack

Head Coach Assistant Coach Assistant Coach

**Varsity Team Finishes**

Sycamore Invite – 11th place

LT Invite – 11th place

Peoria Invite – 25th place

RB Invite – 3rd place

OPRF Invite – 6th place

Lisle Mane Event – 8th place

Sterling Invite – 16th place

Conference – 4th place

Regionals – 1st place

Sectionals – 7th place

**Updates from the 2014 Season…**

## Week #1: September 2nd-6th

Sycamore:
RB girls cross country kicked off its season on Tuesday, September 2nd with a steamy race against tough class 2A competition at Afton Forest Preserve, hosted by Sycamore High School.  The Bulldogs, sporting their new uniforms, (#thankyouRBBoosters) began 2014 with the varsity girls race.  RB was led by their seniors this day, as DeeDee Keen, Reilly O'Donnell, and Meaghan Dorsey comprised the top 3 for the team.  Underclasswomen LuLu Keen (sophomore) and Hailey Jurgens (freshman) rounded out the scoring runners for the team this day.  The Bulldogs finished 11th overall in a tough field, yet displayed a close group from runner #1-7.

The JV race was fun to watch as veteran runners joined an excitable group of freshmen to entertaining finishes.  RB scoring runners finished 25th, 26th, 30th, 31st, and 33rd and all finished within 14 seconds of one another!  Emma Pizana, Val Gaberik, April Flores, Gabby Tarrant, and Mia Hruska found themselves in a tight-knit top 5.  JV finished 6th in the field of 13 teams.  Not bad considering that the heat and humidity provided the illusion of running in an armpit.

Lyons Township Invite
On Saturday, September 6th, RB drove down the street to neighbor Lyons Township to run with some high quality 3A and 2A schools.  The JV girls race was the first of the day.  Junior Alyssa Vasquez ran her first cross country race of high school and finished 3rd on the Bulldogs, while junior Mia Hruska and senior Jackie LaBelle had tremendous races, cutting off huge chunks of time from the first race of the season.  As a team, JV earned 10th place overall.

The Varsity girls were next at 9am.  The sister duo of DeeDee Keen and LuLu "Princess" Keen went 1-2 for the Bulldogs, followed by Meaghan Dorsey, Lauren Primer, and Natalie Cote.  Junior Val Gaberik made her varsity debut, and classmate April Flores rounded out the 7 varsity runners.  RB finished #11 as a team, yet showed continued improvement in their performances during this young season.

The culmination of RB girls racing came with the freshmen girls race at 10am.  The Bulldogs have  8 "class of 2018" runners, and were led by a top 10 overall finish (7th) by Hailey Jurgens.  She got a wonderful start, penetrated the lead pack of runners, and even wore super cool socks for the awards ceremony!  Joining her in the top 30 overall were Emma Pizana (18th) and Gabby Tarrant (29th).  Molly Tracy and Nora Dachota completed the Bulldog scoring 5.

RB next competes in the "First to the Finish" Invitational down in Peoria on Saturday, September 13th.  If you don't mind a bit of a drive, the runners would love your support, and some of the best cross country athletes in the state will be participating.

Go Bulldogs!

## Week #2:  September 8th-13th

The boys and girls cross country teams traveled to central Illinois on Saturday, September 13th to compete in the First to the Finish Invitational at Detweiler Park, the site of the Illinois State Cross Country Championships later in November.  Runners and coaches awoke to crisp morning air--the weather seems to be transitioning from searing late summer heat to cool and dewy mornings, producing both seepage into shoes and out of nasal cavities.

The bus ride was smooth and uneventful.  The driver, a leather-bomber-jacket-wearing European version of our school's instructional technology specialist, masterfully steered the coach bus through tunnels of fog en route to the course.

Upon arriving at the course, the runners set up camp, donned their race chips, and began a long warmup.  As 10:20 neared for the girls 2A race, the atmosphere was laced with nerves, excitement, and intensity.  All girls this day would race as one team, regardless of age or ability, and it would afford the opportunity for great camaraderie between runners 1-26 as they competed against a field of more than 550 girls in class 2A.

When the gun sounded, the herd of girls surged forward to create one massive pack.  The Bulldogs' quest this day was to form numerous smaller packs within the team that would propel them to quicker times and improved performance.  As the race unfolded, freshman Hailey Jurgens broke free in the second mile and led RB with a finish in 72nd place overall!  Sisters DeeDee and Lulu Keen finished next, and the varsity performance was complete when Reilly O'Donnell, Meaghan Dorsey, Emma Pizana, and Natalie Cote ran through the finish.  Many of the girls ran quicker races than they had at this point last season, and RB welcomed 2 newcomers, Emma Beener and Elizabeth Hernandez, in finishing a high school cross country race.

As a team, RB finished 25th in a loaded 51-team field.  It will be a busy upcoming week for the Bulldogs, as they race at Fenton on Tuesday, September 16th and host their own invitational at Sundown Meadows on Friday, September 19th.  Come out and support the team!

## Week #3: September 15th-19th

On Friday, September 19th, the boys and girls cross country teams hosted the RB Invite at Sundown Meadows Forest Preserve. On the girls side, the Bulldogs welcomed two new schools to the race, Oak Park-River Forest and Glenbard North.  Perhaps it was a cockamamie idea to invite Oak Park-River Forest, a big and talented 3A school with great running tradition.  Fun facts leading into the race: 1) Coach Allison Rack of RB ran for OPRF in high school, and 2) Coach Tarrant of OPRF has a daughter on the Bulldogs, freshman Gabby Tarrant.

The first race of the day for the girls was the Freshman/Sophomore race.  It's always exciting to see the young runners get a chance to be showcased instead of being placed in a JV open race, which often happens at some of these weekend invites.  The aforementioned Gabby Tarrant finished in the top 10 for the Bulldogs with a 7th place result, while fellow freshmen Molly Tracy (13th) and Nora Dachota (24th) were next in line for RB, which finished 3rd as a team behind Glenbard North and Nazareth Academy.

Next up was the Varsity race.  An intense and focused top 7 RB squad toed the line and surged from box 7 after the gun sounded. Freshman Hailey Jurgens once again led the way, finishing 7th, and was joined in the top 10 by senior co-captain DeeDee Keen. Reilly O'Donnell had a tremendous race to finish 3rd on RB, and the top 5 was rounded out by sophomore LuLu Keen and senior Meaghan Dorsey.  The entire Bulldog lineup was a tight-knit pack, as freshman Emma Pizana and Natalie Cote were fairly close to the scoring runners.  It was a successful race despite being a long week--the girls got an opportunity to learn the conference course at Fenton High School on Tuesday and participated in Homecoming festivities at school for 4 days.  RB will continue to rely on the mixture of their young freshmen and sophomores, who continue to develop each week, and veteran seniors who have state meet experience.

The final race of the afternoon/early evening was the junior varsity open race.  RB had 3 runners in the top 12, including co-captain Lauren "Primetime" Primer (9th), April Flores (11th), and Mia Hruska (12th).  April had her strongest race of the season to cap the 3rd week of competition, and Mia, who has joined cross country after gathering some track experience, continues to impress with her positive attitude, quirky personality, and running performance.  Other Bulldogs contributing great races were Emma Beener, a junior newcomer, and the always steady leader Ashley Lams.  Ashley is one of a small group on the team with perfect attendance--her strong work ethic each year propels her improvement throughout the season.

The Bulldogs race next at Schiller Woods at the Roy Gummerson Invitational, hosted by OPRF.  Come out and watch these girls do their thang!

## Week #4: September 22nd-September 27th

The girls cross country team traveled to Schiller Woods on Saturday, September 27th to compete in the Roy Gummerson Invitational.  The bus time was made perhaps a bit too early, and this ended up being a good thing.  The team enjoyed a little extra togetherness (as well as 2nd hand smoke from a gentleman's odorous cigarette) during a 27 minute stop behind a freight train and an assortment of Metra commuters.  Upon arrival at the course, the girls were in good spirits, laughing at the expense of their 3 coaches and chiding them for the way that they encourage/cheer the team during previous races.

The first race of the day was the freshmen/sophomore combined race, although RB ran exclusively freshmen this day.  Molly Tracy had a tremendous race, setting a PR by nearly a full minute!  Gabby Tarrant was next for the Bulldogs, and the 5 scoring runners were rounded out by Nora Dachota, Natalie Baiocchi, and Jane Bell.  The team finished 9th overall.  Molly and Gabby maintain their spots in the top 10 on the team and look to be key team leaders later in their careers after they shake off some freshmen silliness.  In all seriousness, however, their care-free demeanor has created quite a loose team dynamic, and they are just fun kids to be around!

Next up was the JV open race.  Despite missing juniors Mia Hruska and April Flores, the Bulldogs still had a very nice race.  Senior Reilly O'Donnell led the race for most of the 1st mile and settled into 4th for the rest, holding off a late charge by an OPRF runner who consistently closed the gap--Reilly should be proud of outlasting this opponent and claiming the 4th place medal overall!  Jackie LaBelle and Val Gaberik worked together for most of the race, with Val making a surge over the hill to coast into the finishing chute next for the team.  Emma Beener and Ashley Lams also formed a nice tandem to make up the rest of the Bulldogs in the race.  The team finished right in the middle of the team pack at 7th overall.

As the temperature escalated, there was definitely a sense that the Varsity race would force runners to overcome the elements, their own nerves, and the effects of pushing themselves to the extreme.  The girls blasted out of the starting box, setting very quick paces during the first mile.  Hailey Jurgens, DeeDee Keen, and LuLu Keen put themselves immediately in the top 30 in the field.  As the team moved into the 2nd mile, DeeDee closed the gap on front runner Hailey.  Unfortunately, a crazy side stitch limited Hailey's effectiveness in the last mile, although she did still come in 3rd for the Bulldogs.  LuLu had a great race to finish 2nd for the team, matching Reilly's time from the JV race.  DeeDee was a sight to behold in the last 800, as she essentially weaved blindly to the finish, delirious from pushing herself through escalating temperatures.  When she reached the finish line in 25th place overall, she was a mess, needing attention by coaches and the athletic trainer.  She was certainly not the only one, as girls were dropping like flies in the finishing area.  But if you didn't realize she was wearing a jersey and spandex, one might think that she was suffering from crapulence--in fact, the leg of the tent is forever tainted by post-race spit-up!  The team had a nice day despite the trauma at the end, finishing 6th overall out of 14 full teams and coming in 1st place out of non-3A schools.

Next week, boys and girls cross country teams compete at the Lisle Mane Event hosted by Lisle High School.  Come out and support the Bulldogs!

## Week #5:  September 29th-October 4th

The girls cross country team traveled to Lisle Senior High School on Saturday, October 4th to participate in the Lisle Main Event Invitational.  There was a big temperature drop this day, as the delta t for the races bordered on 35 degrees!  The girls had a very successful week of practice and were ready to tackle the challenges of the course and the elements.  Runners and coaches alike left the course this day with sopping wet feet--as the day progressed, the rain accelerated, creating some frigid and moist appendages, not to mention seepage into clothing :)

The first race of the day was the freshmen/sophomore race.  While the Bulldogs didn't have quite the number of runners required to score as a team, it was a great blend of newcomers to the roster.  Nora Dachota led the way for RB, while Natalie Baiocchi continued to improve on her season and narrowed the gap on Nora throughout the race, and Eden Munoz ran her first high school cross country race!

The varsity was next off of the line.  The youth movement is beginning to take over as the top 7 this day consisted of 5 underclassmen and 2 seniors.  Freshman Hailey Jurgens placed 17th overall and was the first RB finisher in the race.  Senior captain DeeDee Keen was next, followed by little sister LuLu Keen, whose mercurial personality is propelling her to faster times as the season progresses--she even delivered a love-tap to a fellow runner who invaded her personal bubble!  Meaghan Dorsey and Emma Pizana closed out the scoring RB runners, and Natalie Cote and Gabby Tarrant were in close pursuit throughout the race.  The Bulldogs finished 8th out of the 19 full teams in attendance.

The last race of the morning was the combined JV boys and girls open race.  Freshman Molly Tracy and junior Mia Hruska led the way for RB in this race, finishing 11th and 12th, respectively!  Both Molly and Mia had PR paces for their careers and continue to improve the performance and atmosphere of the team with their positive energy.  Val Gaberik had a very strong race to finish third for the team, and Jackie LaBelle, Amanda Marchese, and Ashley Lams closed out the Bulldog field.

RB competes in the Sterling Invite next Saturday, Oct. 11th.  If you are up for a scenic autumn drive, come out and support the girls!

## Week #6:  October 13th-October 18th

On Saturday, October 18th, a breezy autumn morning, the girls cross country team met at RBHS.  Fresh off of a pasta party and sketchy group text messaging from the previous evening, the team was set to tackle conference opponents at the Metro Suburban West Division race at Fenton High School.

After an impromptu  shift of boys and girls tents from the normal 'hood, the varsity girls took to the course for warmups amid a spitting rain.  Before you could say, "Box 7", it was time to compete in the conference championship!  The 7 varsity girls this day consisted of 2 seniors, 2 sophomores, and 3 freshmen.  Molly Tracy avoided being nearly trampled at the start this time (unlike the pre conference race at the same course), and the Bulldogs set off at the conclusion of the gun blast.  Freshman Hailey Jurgens has embraced the role of lead runner for the varsity squad, and she strongly held her position in the field for all 3 miles.  In fact, Hailey finished in 9th place and earned all-conference honors!  Senior captain DeeDee Keen was next, quickly followed by little sister Lulu.  Meaghan Dorsey had her finest race of the season, and Natalie Cote, Gabby Tarrant, and the aforementioned Molly Tracy finished within 16 seconds of one another.  The underclassmen-heavy Bulldogs have impressed their coaches throughout the season, and this day was no different--many runners either earned PRs or were very near such marks.  The varsity finished 4th out of the 7 teams in the stronger West division of the conference.

An hour later, the JV girls toed the line.  These 10 Bulldogs are an interesting mix, consisting of girls with perfect practice attendance and girls who have barely raced all season due to injury.  Fortunately, runners who have suffered through a variety of ailments this fall were able to come together for their last race of the year.  Juniors April Flores (11th) and Val Gaberik (13th) both medaled and were recognized at the conclusion of the race.  These girls also had their best times of the season to join the postseason crew of Bulldogs who will attend the regional/sectional races.  Other RB girls who had standout races included sophomore Amanda Marchese and junior Emma Beener.  These girls have dropped huge amounts of time from the beginning of the season and should be applauded for their efforts.  RB also said goodbye :( to seniors Jackie LaBelle and Ashley Lams after this race.  Jackie and Ashley have both taken on leadership roles for the JV as well as the entire team and will be missed in the years to come.

RB will compete next Saturday, October 25th at the IHSA regional on their home course at Sundown Meadows.  Come out and cheer the Bulldogs as they vie for a Regional Championship!

## Week #7:  October 20th-October 25th

The RB girls and boys cross country teams hosted a 2A IHSA regional meet on Saturday, October 25th.  It was cracked up to be a warmer-than-typical October day, and the meteorologists didn't lie!  There would be no need for Under Armor, as spandex and short shorts reminiscent of 1970s Bjorn Borg ruled the day.

The varsity girls race started promptly at 10:00am.  The Bulldogs were in good spirits, pumped to race in front of family and friends. The expectation was a team victory, as a majority of the toughest teams were in other nearby Regional races.  Despite the expectation, however, the team had a healthy respect for the competition and took the race and the opportunity to defend home turf quite seriously. When the gun sounded, a majority of RB girls took to the front of the pack.  As they surged into the forest for about a mile and half, freshman Hailey Jurgens was leading the race!  When they exited the forest, RB still held many top positions, although Hailey was 2nd behind Brooks Academy senior Samaya Lewis, the latter sporting an insidious look on her face as she found another gear over the last 200 meters.  The Bulldogs rode their pack to a Regional title, with the top 5 girls (Hailey, DeeDee Keen, Meaghan Dorsey, LuLu Keen, and Natalie Cote) finishing 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 11th respectively.  Meaghan continues to look stronger each day, and Natalie Cote has had an ability to fend off competition all season.  Gabby Tarrant was the 6th RB runner to cross the finish with a strong race, and fellow freshman Emma Pizana finished 25th overall.

It was a strong outcome for RB in the first week of postseason competition.  The running shifts to Kress Creek Farm in West Chicago next Saturday, November 1st.  The Bulldogs will run against some high quality teams in what may be the deepest sectional field in class 2A.  Come out and support your favorite high school cross country team!

## Week #8:  October 27th-November 1st

The boys and girls cross country team boarded their bus around 8 am on Saturday, November 1st en route to West Chicago's Kress Creek Farm to participate in one of 5 class 2A IHSA Sectional races.  This was sure to be one of the most competitive fields in which the Bulldogs have raced all season.  The sectional race is unforgiving--the rules of the game: finish in the top 5 teams and your ticket to the state meet in Peoria is punched.  Finish in the top 7 individually from non-qualifying teams, and you travel downstate to race once more next weekend.

Predictions from one high school cross country website going into the day were for the RB girls to finish 10th out of the 18 teams in attendance.  The Bulldogs were certainly going to have their work cut out for themselves, running with the likes of Glenbard South, Nazareth Academy, Wheaton Academy, Montini, and Aurora Central Catholic, not to mention the team with a coach whose cockamamie idea seems to be to wear khaki shorts, regardless of the temperature or elements.  Fortunately, the girls went into the race with nothing to lose and everything to gain from their efforts.  The coaches were determined to upend the smarmy attitudes of the prognosticators and instill a fighting spirit in the runners this day.

Despite the forecast of a wet and wild Friday the day before the race, the course was in tremendous shape on Saturday, and the fears of seepage (at least from the Earth) subsided on the warmup run.  Nerves were playing a role, as the girls realized that this could be the last race this season as a team and they wanted to ensure solid performances.  The coaching staff wanted nothing but great effort from their athletes, but district 208's 3-sport coach of cross country, tennis, and science also had an insidious plan: to make it really challenging for some of the occasionally-pompous Dyestat's favorite teams to make it to State.

As RB penetrated box 9 one last time and toed the line, tensions were high, but when the gun went off, it was time to unleash a season's worth of effort and lay it all out on the course.  Freshman Hailey Jurgens went after it early, and about half a mile into the race she found herself in the lead pack with some of class 2A's studs.  The other lady Bulldogs out there this day included DeeDee Keen, LuLu Keen, Meaghan Dorsey, Gabby Tarrant, Molly Tracy, and Natalie Cote.  They formed tight packs with their competitors and ran aggressively.  All 7 girls finished in the top half of the field, notably Hailey (18), DeeDee (44), LuLu (53), Meaghan (57), and freshman Gabby (65).  Mercurial Meaghan had a crazy kick at the end, flying past several girls on her way into the chute.  Impressively, all runners had either a season or career PR.  Simply put, the coaching staff could not be prouder of this team!

After the race began the tumultuous waiting game prior to awards, but it didn't stop the gals from a bit of post-race crapulence, as donuts and hot chocolate were consumed like they were going out of style!  When awards were announced, the team finished in 7th overall, and freshman lead runner Hailey ran quickly enough to qualify individually for the state meet next Saturday.  She will be joined by senior Wayne Morrelly from the boys team, who ran a career best to qualify for the state race as well.  If you have any availability, drive down to scenic Peoria...I'm actually serious--it's pretty neat-looking this time of year-- to watch RB's 2 individuals run in the culminating race of the season.

## Week #9: November 3rd-November 8th

The RB cross country teams wrapped up their seasons on Saturday, November 8th at the  IHSA State Finals at Detweiler Park in Peoria, Illinois.  Freshman rising star Hailey Jurgens would be representing the girls team, while the veteran with the unique personality, Wayne Morrelly, would lead the boys team.  Joining Hailey down in Peoria to support her race would be seniors DeeDee Keen and Meaghan Dorsey, sophomore LuLu Keen, and freshmen Gabby Tarrant and Molly Tracy.

The weather was blustery Saturday morning, and the surprisingly supple tree limbs lining the course withstood the ferocious winds Friday evening into the next morning.  The team arrived at the course, claimed one side of a gigantic Oak tree, and set off to get Hailey prepped for her big race.  RB walked to the starting boxes, participated in pre-race rituals, and then Hailey was left to ponder what would soon unfold for the last 5 minutes prior to the race.  Coaches had a feeling that something big was about to happen, and they would be correct.

When the gun sounded, Hailey took off, placing herself aggressively near the front of the field.  She was surrounded by some of the best runners in the state, and she assimilated herself nicely for the next 18 minutes!  She even fought off a hair-tie malfunction in mile 3 to coast into the finish line with a 39 second PR!  She finished 38th place overall, outdone in RB history at the 3 mile distance only by standout exchange student Mailin Struck last season, who took home the 2A individual title  It was a remarkable race from a runner who is beginning to see that she is pretty talented at this whole running thing.  Fun facts from this race: Hailey beat 9 of the 17 girls who finished ahead of her last weekend at sectionals, and she was the 7th freshmen in class 2A to cross the line yesterday.

The future bodes well for the Bulldogs, who lose 2 seniors from their top 7 (DeeDee and Meaghan).  Both of these young ladies had tremendous HS careers with several big races under their belts.  Their support and experience shared this season with their teammates cannot be undervalued.  They will pass the torch to future upperclassmen LuLu, Natalie Cote, April Flores, and Mia Hruska.  These runners will be joined by Hailey, Gabby, Molly, Emma Pizana, and a couple of promising incoming freshman next season.  Thank you to all of the parents and families for continued support this season!  Is it too early to be excited for next fall??

Brennan Denny, Head Girls Cross Country Coach