



2026 Member Handbook



Blue Thunder Track Club is a member of the Amateur Athletic Union, USA Track & Field
and a partner of Columbia Parks and Recreation

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MEMBERSHIP

The membership fee for the 2026 track season will be \$155 per athlete.

Each membership fee includes:

- AAU membership and card
- Unlimited entry fees to sanctioned meets of your choice
- Blue Thunder Track Club T-Shirt

Membership fees are not refundable or transferable. Athletes will not be allowed to participate until all membership fees are paid in full and paperwork is complete unless other arrangements have been made.

EQUIPMENT

Club Uniforms

An authorized Blue Thunder meet uniform must be worn at each meet. This year's uniform is a royal singlet, and a choice between matching running shorts or compression shorts. There will also be options for other team items such as bags, warm ups, T-shirts, and more. Information about the uniform/gear website & the order process will be provided to you. Members are responsible for picking up their own orders directly from D-Sport once they are ready.

Shoes for Training

The most important piece of equipment needed is a good pair of training shoes. Running shoes (not basketball, court, or cross-training shoes) are required for all practice sessions. These shoes should have good support, be relatively lightweight, and be comfortable.

Shoes for Competitive Events

Spikes are allowed and are encouraged for competitions (unless otherwise noted). However, they are not mandatory. Ask your coach for suggestions.

Implements & Equipment for Specialists

Throwers, jumpers and others tend to purchase their own equipment so they can get work done on non-practice days. It is not a requirement, but certainly convenient and smart. Items such as a shot put, discus, measuring tape, starting blocks, medicine balls & training aides are common purchases of young athletes serious about improving. Check with your coach before making certain purchases.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Conduct which is not in compliance with the Code of Conduct and/or which is detrimental to the Club may result in an athlete's dismissal from the Club.

Fees will not be refunded in the event of dismissal.

Parents

- Encourage good sportsmanship, win or lose.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship toward all athletes, coaches, and officials at every practice and meet.
- Support the Club by volunteering to help at social events and fundraising events.
- Support the coaches. Coaches are volunteers giving their personal time – show respect and appreciation for that. Parents may discuss the training/coaching program with coaches following practice.
- If not traveling with the Club to meets, arrive at all AAU meets at least 1 hour prior to the start of the first scheduled event, and check-in with the designated team parent or appropriate Blue Thunder Coach.
- Place the physical and emotional well-being of your child above any personal desire that he or she wins.
- Remember, children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment, not ours. Children need positive role models and support, not criticism.

Athletes

- Do your best to be at every scheduled practice on time and prepared. Coaches will not delay scheduled activities or extend practice to accommodate late arrivals. If you arrive late, be responsible enough to do your warm up routine, then join your group.
- Arrive at practice ready to listen, work hard, and learn.
- Be respectful to coaches, officials, teammates, and competitors on other teams.
- Learn the rules and always compete by them.
- Use only appropriate language.
- Support and cheer on your fellow teammates.

General

Any complaints or disagreements with the coaches or the Club shall be communicated through the President of the Club or the Head Coach. Speaking ill of the Club and/or creating dissension among Club members will not be tolerated. Violation of this rule can or will result in immediate dismissal from the Club.

PRACTICES

The Club schedules regular practice sessions that each athlete should attend. The practice schedule will be provided by the coaches and will be listed on the Club's website.

Practice Regulations for Athletes

- Athletes should try to attend all practices. The more they practice, the more they should improve if working hard.
- Please make sure Athletes use the restroom **before** they arrive. Bathroom facilities are not always available to us at practices.
- Athletes should arrive on time and ready to workout. We start practice with stretching & warm ups; and your athlete will need to be there to get properly stretched to prevent injury. If he/she arrives late, then the routine must be done on their own before practicing
- Athletes should have the following at each practice:
 - Water Bottle
 - Clothing appropriate for weather and training
 - Training Shoes
 - Sunblock as appropriate to season
- Athletes must follow the directions of the coaching staff during practices. This includes doing the exercises, participating in all drills, and completing the training program.
- The following is not allowed: profanity, horseplay, abusive language, fighting, etc...
- Equipment is to be used only for purposes for which designed. Playing on or with equipment is not permitted. This includes jump mats, hurdles, sand pits, and more.
- Members unwilling to participate in workouts will be dismissed from the track or practice area; and will not be allowed to participate in workouts until coaches have spoken with the parents.
- Repeated misconduct, distractions and/or refusal to do workouts will be grounds for termination from the program. No membership fees will be refunded if a membership is terminated.

Practice Regulations for Parents

- Parents are allowed to walk or run on the track during practices so long as your presence does not interfere with the training. The outside lane or preferably just inside of the track on the grass surface is the safest place to be. Be alert to all athletes using the track facility.
- Parents shall refrain from coaching or instructing athletes during practice sessions. Coaching is the exclusive responsibility of the Blue Thunder coaching staff.
- Parents should not engage the coaching staff during practice sessions unless the team is on a break. Coaches are available to answer questions before and after practices.
- There is no need to notify the coach if your child will not be able to participate in a scheduled practice as practices are not mandatory.

Practice and "Bad" Weather

The coaches will not cancel practice because of rainy weather in general. Practice will be held as scheduled except in the event of dangerous weather at start time, such as lightning. Often there is rainy or "bad" weather throughout the day, then it clears up in time for practice. So, the head coach will arrive no matter what. In the very rare event that a scheduled practice is cancelled ahead of time due to weather, the Club will inform the members by e-mail and / or on the Club's website. Otherwise, just expect to show up to the practice site ready to go.

MEET RESPONSIBILITIES & RULES

To ensure a Blue Thunder Athlete's optimum performance at meets, the athletes and parents have certain responsibilities and rules to follow.

General Information

Meet information will be provided prior to each meet. This will be by e-mail and on the website or Facebook page. Please make sure that the Club has current e-mail and phone contact information for you. If you do not have web or e-mail access, please make that known as soon as possible. The parents and athletes are responsible for knowing the athlete's meet events and times.

The Club will have a designated area for the athletes and parents to stay during the meet. All athletes are encouraged sit in this area. If you choose to sit elsewhere, you may miss important communication from the coach or board to the team. That is your choice. Some families like to be on their own, and that is understandable.

Ultimately, parents choose events for meets. But keep in mind that we train athletes to participate in specific events passed on what we saw during the evaluation period. Feel free to discuss events with the coaches prior to entry.

Relay teams are put together if the coaching staff feels there are enough runners in a particular event to field a competitive team on the national level. We do not run relays just to run relays, the purpose is to win. The consistently fastest 4 performers in each age group will make the team. In some cases, a coach may decide to have a relay run-off to determine the top 4. Relay teams may change throughout the season. So just because someone was one of the fastest 4 earlier in the season, that doesn't mean it necessarily holds true later as athletes may develop at different rates through the season. It is common practice to ask an athlete to run a relay to get the team qualified for a later meet. But, another athlete may be placed in that spot at the later meet with intentions to have the best outcome.

If an athlete wishes to compete at a meet, this must be communicated to the head coach prior to the registration deadline, and as early as possible. Meet entry request forms will be available on the website to complete online.

Spectator admission fees are usually charged at all the meets. Please keep this in mind when planning on what to bring to the meet.

Responsibilities

Arrival. Sanctioned meets usually begin around 8:00am and are set on a rolling schedule. Attempting to arrive when you think your athlete's event will begin is a tricky game that could cause your young athlete to miss his/her event. **Safe time is start time.** Parents are responsible for having their athlete present on time. Keep in mind that athletes need about 30-45 minutes for stretching and warm-ups prior to competing.

Check in with the Club. Upon arrival at the meet, check in with the Club at the designated area and get your bib numbers, wristband, and instructions. Please keep track of your bib number and/or wrist band, usually you will be charged around \$15 or more by the meet host to replace them depending upon the meet.

Come prepared. Wear your Blue Thunder uniform. Make sure you have your training shoes, spikes, and water bottle. Bring a jacket or sweats to every meet – weather is unpredictable. Download the meet check list from the website.

Warm up. You are ultimately in charge of getting yourself warmed up prior to competing. These are mostly the same warm ups that you do at the start of practice. Your body and performance are your responsibility!

Bring drinks and food. Bring plenty of water and healthy food. Don't rely on meet concessions. Plan on being there most of the day. Usually track meets run from early morning into the late afternoon. Some run longer than others.

Pay attention to the meet announcer. The meet announcer makes the calls for each event check-in. It is your responsibility to get to your event on time.

Check in for event. When you check in, you should be ready to compete (with uniform, bib number, wrist band, and shoes). Take your water bottle with you to check in if allowed. Once you check in to your event, you should not leave the check in area. This is so important because at most of the AAU meets, coaches will not be allowed on the track which means you have to be responsible for getting yourself into your assigned event. Running events take precedence over field events. If you are checked in at the field event and your running event is called, you will need to talk to the official in charge at your field event to let them know that you need to leave for your other event and will return when you finish; therefore, it is **very** important to continue listening for calls when you are at your field events.

Waiting to compete. While you are sitting in the designated Club area waiting to compete, cheer on your teammates, and don't keep yourself exposed to the sun. Begin your warm up routine around 30 minutes prior to competing.

CLUB TRAVEL

All athletes are expected to attend all meets for which they qualify (relays included). This includes out-of-town meets. A list of all meets and their locations will be provided and posted on the Club's website.

Later in the season, meets may continue for multiple days. Travel to out-of-town meets entails additional cost not included in the Club's fee. Such expenses could include hotel stays, meals, and admission fees.

The Club can arrange hotel accommodations for the club for multi-day out-of-town meets if it decides to do so. But, we usually let families book on their own, and stay where they wish. Payment for individual rooms is the responsibility of the parent. If the club does block rooms, the Club will try to have all members stay at the same location. If the member does not desire to stay at the Club's hotel, then the member is responsible for making his/her own accommodations.

GENERAL

Mission. Most importantly we want our athletes to enjoy themselves, work hard, continue to improve, and have some fun. Blue Thunder is committed to providing kids of all abilities with the opportunity to participate in competitive track & field and to learn the fundamentals for success both on and off the track.

Blue Thunder website. The Club's primary mode of communication will be e-mail and the website. SPEND SOME TIME CHECKING OUT THE SITE. It has everything you will need to know and lots of helpful information about the sport of Track & Field and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). You will find past results, where you rank nationally, and the club records. The Club's website address is: www.BlueThunderTrackClub.com. We also update and communicate through our Facebook page. So, be sure to follow it.

Fundraisers. The Club will sometimes have fundraisers during the season. We realize that traveling out of town for meets can become expensive and we intend to raise funds to help cut down some of the expense. Each family will be expected to show support and help out the Club in its fundraising efforts. Our largest fundraiser is the championship meet that we host in July.

Social events. We believe that there is great value to team bonding. We love how the athletes begin the season as a bit shy and timid and by the end they are all the best of friends. Outside activities enhance this bonding. If you have ideas about a fun social activity, please discuss it with us.

Committees. Committee participation is encouraged.

Help at meets. There is a need for a few parents to assist at meets. If interested, please contact the Club President for more information. Our yearly meet in July is our largest fundraiser; and your help is expected as well as needed.

Shoe recycle. You will likely get about one season out of a pair of spikes. If your athlete has outgrown their pair, please consider donating them to the Club's recycle program. We offer used spikes to lend out to members of the club at a very reasonable price of \$10 a pair for the season.

CLUB CONTACTS

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