

# Alton High gets in new groove with football-cross country-track combination for boy athletes

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - For the Alton High School track and field athletes, the time of year has come for football and cross country, but the boys track and field coach Jeff White is still reflecting on the turnaround of his program over the past spring.

The track and field team will be showcased all over the AHS football team this fall. The same holds true for the Alton High School boys cross country team, which features many distance runners from track.

Alton High School head football coach Eric Dickerson has recognized the importance of combining football and track and field together, so it is no coincidence many boys are involved in both sports. Between White and Dickerson's efforts, many of the football players are now going out for the Alton boys track and field team. During the Redbirds' famed run in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was a given for track and field athletes to participate in football.

The Alton High School 4 x 800 relay team of Kelvin Cummings, Evan Rathgeb, Cassius Havis and Arie Macias, recorded a time of 8:13.44 at state. It was the first time in several years to qualify in that event, White said. Alton High School shot putter Kalen Samuelson had a 50-2.75 toss in the shot put at state.

“It’s been a very long time since an Alton 4 x 800 relay team qualified for state in track,” White said.

Havis and Earlie Brown, both now a sophomore and junior respectively, were standouts on the AHS team last year. Brown recorded some outstanding times in the 100 and 200 meters and was a member of the sprint relays, while Havis shined in the middle distance events, pushing upperclassmen to the limit in his races last spring.

“We have some good kids coming up and we have a decent amount of depth overall,” White said. “We will have three of four of our top sprinters back this upcoming year.”

White said he loves working with Coach Dickerson and how the football and track and field programs are now working hand in hand together.

“My goal coming in as coach was I wanted to be competitive in the Southwestern Conference,” Coach White said. “I admire what Coach (Chad) Lakatos has done in Edwardsville with its track and field program and would like to do the same here. Our goal next season will be to go to state and bring home some state medals. We feel we have something special going on with the student-athletes we have at Alton High.

"As coaches, we left the meets excited last year and the athletes did the same. That was a huge thing when the program hadn't had a lot of success in a while. It is really powerful that the kids are starting to get excited about our football and track programs.”





