



Front row, from left: Lauryn Dillard, Brittany Reidhead, Mikaylin Whitley, Elizabeth Coles Back row, from left: Assistant coach Manuel “Grandpa” Quintana, Filimon Kednmarey, Oswaldo Marrufo, Harrison Breden, Charles Liermann, Alex Blodgett, Tanis Palmer, Jayden Enos, head coach Corey Nelson

Joey Chenoweth/PinalCentral

**MARICOPA** — Like any good runner’s philosophy, the Maricopa cross country team is trying to take their season one quality stride at a time.

During the early days of practice, the turnout was a little lower than the previous season, but coach Corey Nelson believes as kids get their paperwork taken care of, those numbers will go up.

In any case, this will be a young team that needs to get a firm grasp on the fundamentals. Nelson said everything is starting with the basics so far, but by the end of the season they have the potential for more.

“We want to build character and structure, and we want leadership from our upperclassmen,” Nelson said. “We want buy-in from our younger kids, which they already have, and it’s building a positive atmosphere at its core where they compete, but they’ll have fun doing it.”

The team is lucky to have two different courses to practice on to develop different skills. When they want to improve their mileage, they go to their home course at Copper Sky, and when the focus is on speed and endurance, they go to Meadows Park. That also prepares them for some of the different courses they’ll see throughout the season, with a bit more incline than can be found at Copper Sky.

“We’re not even thinking about state right now,” Nelson said. “We’re just trying to build some consistency and get consistent training.”

Cross country fans will appreciate the team’s current schedule, since there will be four home dual meets at Copper Sky. Nelson looks forward to hosting other schools and getting those spectators out there.

“We have a pretty good turnout carrying over from track,” Nelson said. “We have a lot of helpers and volunteers. Our cross country program is well supported here in Maricopa.”