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## Olentangy Liberty Men's Distance Track Preview

By: Luke Schmitt

Last season at Freedom Relays in 2022, Liberty's men's distance team accrued nine total racing points. This year at Freedom Relays, the team scored 17 total racing points. That statistic alone should prove the amount of hard work and effort that has changed the course of this team's future, and this 2023 men's distance track team has matured and is blossoming with potential.

This change starts with the return of the distance track team's head coach, Jared Mills. Mills coached cross country and distance track at Liberty from 2007 until 2019, when he stepped down to make time for family. It had seemed like Coach Mills' legendary tenure at Liberty was over until spring when he stepped back into his role as a coach for the men's Liberty distance track and cross country team.

Coach Mills has unlocked the potential of this young distance team, and the future is looking very bright for them. Under a carefully planned running plan and training, he has brought this team from the bottom of the district to regional and state appearances for cross country and track and field appearances.

Although this team is young and still training to reach their peak fitness, they have lofty goals and high expectations for themselves going into the postseason.

The 4x800 meter relay team (Aadi Joshi, Noah Miller, Jacob Rygielski, Jaxson Eckert) is looking to bring their team to the state meet. Jaxson leads the team with his best split being a 1:54, with Aadi, Jacob, and Noah trailing closely behind him with times all at 2:00. Their relay team currently ranks first in the state, and they are looking to keep that standing as the season winds down and the postseason begins.

Shrey Mhaskar, Hani Deen, and Zeid Rabi are also big names to watch as they are seconds away from breaking the ten-minute mark in the two-mile. Zee has the fastest two mile time with a 10:02, with Hani and Shrey close behind him with a 10:05 and a 10:08. This long-distance trio continues to push each other each week and fight for the final spots on the postseason lineup.

The future is bright, and most of Liberty's key distance runners will return next year. Liberty is booming

with depth, but they are a very young team, and for most runners competing, it will be their first time in a postseason environment. If they can overcome their inexperience in the postseason, then Liberty will be poised for a successful postseason, and one that is talked about for years to come.



Photo credits: Molly Eckert

Mohan Shah getting ready for his 4x400 meter relay at a meet vs Dublin Jerome.

## Zeid Rabi

### Sophomore

Zeid Rabi is a perfect example of hard work and the power of coaching. Last track season, Zee was towards the back of the roster and was in the slower heats for all events. A year later, Zee is the season leader for the two-mile with a time of 10:02. Zee put in 386 miles of running this past winter and is now running in varsity invitationals with an opportunity to make a huge impact in the postseason for Liberty. Zee is only a sophomore and has two more seasons to break even more barriers than he has.



Photo credits: Luke Schmitt

Zee finishing his 4x1600 meter-relay at the Big Walnut Relays.

## Noah Miller

### Junior

Noah Miller missed almost all of his fall cross-country season because of an injury. Noah healed quickly, and his work in the winter helped him and his indoor 4x800-meter relay team get to the state meet. This spring, Noah is back on the track and is helping Liberty in the mile and the state-bound 4x8 team. "Teammates often say his work ethic is unparalleled. Noah represents everything that our team stands for at Liberty" said Aadi Joshi.



Photo credits: Molly Eckert

Noah getting ready for his leg of the 4x800 meter relay at the Joe Lenge Invitational.

## Jaxson Eckert

### Senior

Jaxson Eckert runs short and long-distance events. Jaxson joined the cross-country team his senior year to become closer to the distance team and work on his ability to run longer distances. Because of Jaxson's work in cross country, he has transformed into a great mid-distance runner. Now, Jaxson runs on the 400-meter relay team and is also helping the 4x800 relay team make it to states. Jaxson has been the state leader for the 400 and the 800 at a certain point this year, and he is continuing his running career at The Ohio State University.



Photo credits: Molly Eckert

Jaxson finishing his leg of the 4x800 meter relay at the Joe Lenge Invitational.

## End of Season Schedule

Last dual meet at Olentangy  
5/2

Orange 9/10 Invite  
5/3

Delaware County Invitational  
5/5

JV OCC at Westerville North  
5/9

OCC Pre-lims at Upper Arlington  
5/10

OCC Finals at Big Walnut  
5/13

District Finals at Hilliard Darby  
5/20

Regional Finals at Pickerington North  
5/26

State Meet at Jesse Owens Stadium  
6/2&3