

Unified Track and Field

IHSAA Unified Track and Field - What is It?!

Unified Track and Field is Penn High School's newest IHSAA athletic team and we began competing in the spring of 2019. As described on the IHSAA website, Unified is a "joint IHSAA / Special Olympics project that allows high school students with and without intellectual disabilities to collectively represent their high school in an IHSAA sanctioned activity by participating together on a Unified track team".

Embracing Unified Sports

Young people with disabilities do not often get a chance to play on their high school sports teams. More and more State High School Associations are adopting the Unified Sports approach that Special Olympics pioneered.

Unified Track and Field became an IHSAA sport in 2013

- ★ 2013 - 13 teams
- ★ 2018 - 110 teams
- ★ 2019 - Penn's 1st team competed in the Spring of 2019
- ★ 2025 - 136 teams

Meet the Coaches



**Coach Blazo
(Head Coach)
2019**



**Jose Gutierrez
(Assistant)
2023**



**Payton Adkins
(Assistant)
2023**



**Alex Dunfee
(Assistant)
2025**



**Lisa Ludwig
(Assistant)
2024**

What we have achieved so far...

- ★ **State Finalist:** 2019 (5th Place), 2022 (5th Place), 2023 (4th Place)
- ★ **Growth of the Program:** Started with 19 athletes, 2024 season we had 77 athletes. Every year has had growth.
- ★ **Creating friendships that last outside of their school career.**

Testimonials from Athletes...

“It’s just all inclusive, it gives students who wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to be in a sport to have a sport that is all about them and showcase their talents” (24 Senior)

“Unified Track is good for me because I like the sport and the community.” (23 Sophomore)

“I love that it feels like a family, everybody cheers on everybody. Even at track meets I feel safe and can have the best time of my life.” (24 Junior)

Training and Preparation...

When we Meet

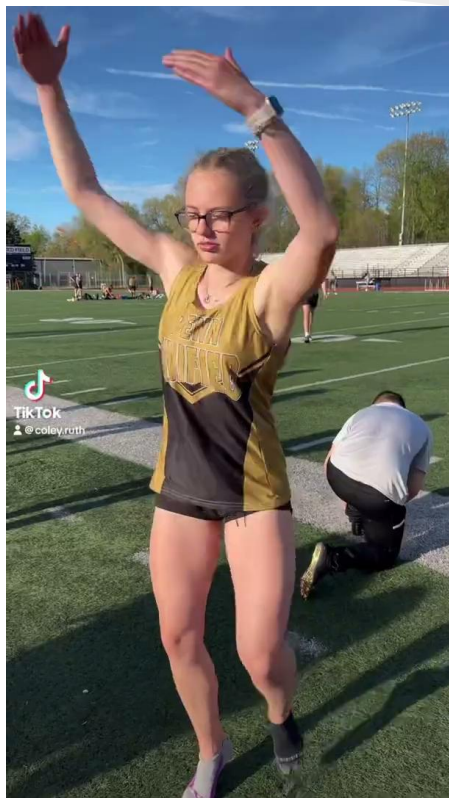
February - Optional Conditioning. Focus is to build community by playing games. (3-4 Days)

March-June - Practices are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday. Then when May hits, we practice Monday-Thursday to prepare for tournament season.

Practices Look Like (3:45pm to 5:15pm)

- Warm ups / Stretches
- We start practice with Cardio workouts and then transition to Field workouts.
- Everyone participates if they are not hurting at all.
 - Common confusion is that athletes who do not have intellectual disabilities think they are there to help and not needing to do the work.
- Overtime, students will decide on what two events they would like to do going into the tournament season. One field event and one running event.

We do have fun...



Challenges and Solutions

- Challenge: Making this program as inclusive as possible.
 - Solution: We troubleshooted and was able to work something out to make sure that we have the supports available to include everybody.
- Challenge: Traffic on the Track
 - Solution: Working with the other Sport programs
- Challenge: Qualifying in the Tournament Season
 - Solution: Placing the kids in the best situation to succeed
- Challenge: Making sure to bridge the gap between our different backgrounds.
 - Solution: We make sure to communicate well and create activities where we can all bond.

Amazing Support from the Administration and Staff



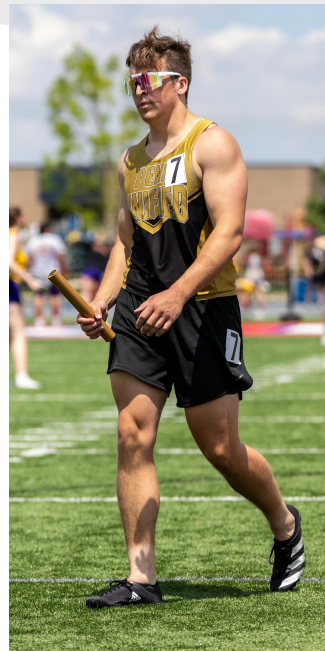
Team Building Activities



Everyday is an Adventure !!



We LOVE our Seniors!



Athletes and Partners



Athletes and Partners



Athletes and Partners





WE ARE UNIFIED!