

# *Highlander* NATION



## *Fall Sports*

— September —

# Athletic Social

## Highlanders

3RD ANNUAL

# ATHLETIC SOCIAL



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25



4:30 PM



STARTS IN THE GYM  
CONCLUDES IN THE STADIUM

**FOOD • GAMES • GIVEAWAYS • MUSIC • & MORE!**

**#WeAre90631**

# August Review

By Tom Connolly



## FOOTBALL

The Highlanders opened their season in dominant fashion with a 55-13 victory over Upland, piling up 587 yards of total offense. Senior quarterback DJ Mitchell accounted for eight touchdowns through the air and on the ground, throwing for 219 yards and five touchdowns while adding 123 rushing yards. Blake Rogers caught seven passes for 144 yards and three touchdowns, while CJ Dickerson rushed for 112 yards and added a touchdown. Andrew Becerra, Kevika Mata-Utia Martinez, Dylan Gunnell, and Ethan Raphiel also found the end zone for La Habra.

La Habra continued its strong start in its home opener, defeating Northview 35-14. Mitchell connected with Rogers for three more touchdown passes as the Highlanders improved to 2-0. Through the first two games, Mitchell has thrown for 403 yards and eight touchdowns while adding 131 rushing yards. Rogers has hauled in 12 receptions for 293 yards and six touchdowns, while Dickerson has rushed for 225 yards and two scores. The Highlander rushing attack is averaging an impressive 9.5 yards per carry, and the offense has totaled 936 yards through the first two games.



DJ Mitchell is a member of our Athletic Leadership Council and has made an outstanding impact both on and off the field. He opened the season with an incredible eight total touchdowns in the team's first two games, setting the tone with his playmaking ability, preparation, and competitive drive. DJ's early success is a direct reflection of the work he put in during the offseason. He remained committed to improving his strength, skills, and understanding of the game while encouraging his teammates to match his effort. His work ethic and leadership will be instrumental as the Highlanders pursue a second consecutive CIF championship. DJ also committed to continue his academic and athletic career at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and will graduate early.



# BOY'S WATER POLO

The Highlanders Boys Water Polo team closed out August with a 3-4 record after facing a challenging early-season schedule. La Habra competed in the Long Beach Tournament on August 28-29, finishing 1-3 and earning an exciting 16-13 victory over Long Beach Poly.

La Habra started the season with back-to-back victories over Fullerton and Redlands East Valley. The Highlanders also battled Downey in one of their most exciting matches of the month, narrowly falling 20-19 in overtime.

Through seven matches, Garrett Carty has led the Highlander offense with an impressive 40 goals. La Habra is also looking forward to the return of All-CIF goalkeeper Jude Muci, who has been sidelined with a groin injury. His return to the lineup should provide another boost as the Highlanders move deeper into their season.



As the Boys Water Polo team begins its 2026 campaign, junior attacker Garrett Carty picked up right where he left off at the end of his sophomore season. In 2025, Carty scored over 100 goals and in the first three (3) games of the 2026 season Carty has already racked up 21 goals, scoring four (4) against Fullerton, eight (8) against Redlands East Valley and nine (9) against Downey. Carty, a returning First Team All Crestview League athlete and returning Captain, spent the last 9 months training to improve his water polo craft by competing in 60+ club water polo games including the USA Water Polo Junior Olympics at the 18U level. He

also grinded through the boys high school swim season in the spring of 2026 where he was a CIF Southern Section finalist in the 50 freestyle, 100 freestyle, and two team relays. Also a standout in the classroom and on campus, Garrett maintains a GPA of above 4.5 and is entering his third year as member of the LHHS ASB. Look for Garrett to continue to lead the Highlander Boys Water Polo team in their pursuit of a Crestview League and CIF Southern Section Championship



# GIRL'S GOLF

The Highlanders Girls Golf team opened its season at La Mirada Golf Course against Brea Olinda. Sophie Oliver and Siena Verdugo led La Habra, with both golfers shooting in the 40s over nine holes. Reagan Fernandez, Mila King, and Audrey Garcia also delivered promising performances in their season debuts. The young Highlanders will look to continue improving and building confidence as the season progresses.



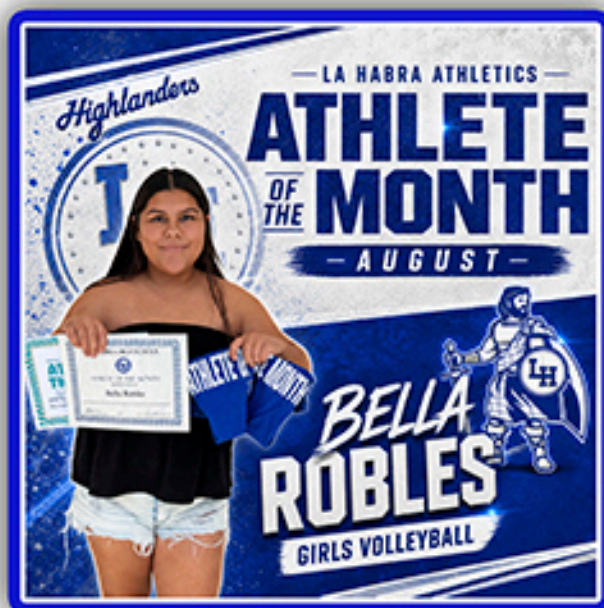
Ellianna has had a great summer camp leading up to the start of school. She has been chosen as a team captain in her senior season. Ellianna is extremely active on campus and is an honor student. Elli plays an assortment of musical instruments at an elite level and she is part of the school's choir. Elli is a great example of a La Habra Student Athlete that is active in her sport, activities on campus and high achieving in the classroom.



# GIRL'S VOLLEYBALL

The young Highlanders Volleyball team has shown tremendous competitiveness, resilience, and determination throughout the opening month of the season. With a roster made up largely of underclassmen and several key players currently unavailable, the team has continued to battle, improve, and gain valuable experience each time it takes the court.

New head coach Zoe Herrera, along with assistant coach Kevin Torres, is working hard to build a strong foundation for the program. Their focus has been on developing the girls' confidence, strengthening their fundamental skills, and creating a team culture centered on growth, accountability, and competing together. While this season is an important step in that process, the work being done now is also designed to build a



Bella Robles continues to grow as both a setter and defensive specialist, always willing to step into whatever role best supports her team. Her impact extends well beyond the court. Bella consistently arrives early and takes the initiative to help our freshman and junior varsity teams. She also remains dedicated to her academics, successfully balancing her schoolwork with her commitment to volleyball. Leadership is not always easy, especially while bringing teammates together and maintaining a high level of personal performance. Bella continues to embrace that challenge and lead by example. Her leadership, character, selflessness, and initiative have made her an invaluable part of our program and a deserving choice for Girls Volleyball Athlete of the Month.



# GIRL'S TENNIS

La Habra opened its season against Valley Christian, falling 14-4 despite several strong individual performances. Samantha Sumpter and Melanie Escota each earned victories in singles competition. In doubles action, the teams of Lily Henriquez and Ella Stone, along with Julissa Cardenas and Mia Pinedo, also recorded wins for the Highlanders.

The Highlanders continued their early-season schedule with a home match against Los Altos on August 31, falling 13-5. La Habra will look to build on its early performances as the team continues through its non-league schedule.



Samantha is one of the hardest-working girls on the team. She leads by example. She has a real competitive spirit and does not like to lose. In our first match against Valley Christian, Samantha was a true standout. She took their Singles 1 to the brink and came up short, 5-7. In her last match, she was all over the court. After a short medical timeout for calf cramping due to the heat, she defeated their Singles 2, 7-5. She is always upbeat, focused, and willing to put in extra time and effort to improve her skills and be more competitive.



# FLAG FOOTBALL

The Highlanders battled through a challenging opening stretch before earning their first victory of the season with a 12-2 win over Villa Park. Audrey Flores and Kaitlin Cauley each scored touchdowns to help secure the victory.

Despite the early record, La Habra has remained competitive while producing several impressive individual performances. Through the first six games, quarterback Presley Cannon completed 97 passes for 818 yards and two touchdowns. Cauley recorded 34 receptions for 268 yards, rushed for 159 yards, scored two touchdowns, and added two interceptions on defense.



As a freshman, Hayden has already made an immediate impact on our program, earning a starting role on both sides of the ball. She has stepped into a big role with confidence and continues to show that she belongs through her toughness, athleticism, and willingness to compete every single play. What stands out most about Hayden is her work ethic and effort. She comes ready to work every day, gives great effort in practices and games, and is always looking for ways to improve. Her commitment, attitude, and team-first mentality have made her a player we can count on. We are extremely proud of the way Hayden has started her high school career and are excited to see what the future holds for this freshman standout!



# CROSS COUNTRY

The La Habra Cross Country program turned in a strong performance at the Mountie Xpress Invitational at Mt. SAC on August 22. Five Highlander runners finished among the top 30 in their respective races and earned medals. Freshman Olivia Olmos led the way with a seventh-place finish, followed by junior Emily Flores in 15th, senior Isaiah Ross in 18th, sophomore Sofia Ramos in 23rd, and sophomore Gustavo Alvarez in 27th. It was an impressive early-season showing for the Highlanders as they continue to build toward the heart of their season.



Emily demonstrates an excellent work ethic and is a positive influence on her teammates. She consistently showed up and committed herself throughout the summer, demonstrating her dedication and reliability. Emily was also our top female runner at the Mountie Invite, an accomplishment that reflects her hard work and determination. She maintains a great attitude, works well with others, and is an excellent student. Overall, Emily is a dedicated, positive, and hardworking student-athlete who is a pleasure to have on the team.

# Where are they now?



## Mitch Callahan

Mitch Callahan was born in Whittier and is a former La Habra High School student. He went onto a 13-year professional hockey playing career that led him into the National Hockey League (NHL). Callahan was drafted in 6th round of the 2009 NHL draft and played in 705 professional games, scored 169 goals, had 208 assists for 377 points in a career that spanned from 2008 -2020. The gritty and hard working forward spent the majority of his career in the minor Leagues where he won two

Calder Cup championships in the American Hockey League with the Grand Rapid Griffins. He also won a Western Hockey League championship with the Kelowna Rockets in 2009. Callahan played his final year (2019-20 season) in professional hockey in Germany for the Augsburger Panthers.

Callahan made his NHL debut with the Red Wings in March 2014 against the Columbus Blue Jackets. He also spent time with Detroit during the 2016-17 season as well. During a game with the Grand Rapids Griffins in April 2014, Callahan suffered a severe injury when he was hit in the mouth by a slap shot. He lost 10 teeth, sustained a fractured jaw and a severely split upper lip. However, prior to departing for the hospital to receive treatment, Callahan took a smiling, yet graphic, picture of his injury and posted it online. Needless to say, the picture went viral over the internet

"The worse part was when they wired my jaw shut; I couldn't do much," he said. "It also hurt pretty bad when they took the wires off. I couldn't chew food too well for about 6 weeks."

Callahan also represented the United States at the 2011 World Junior Ice Hockey Championships, where he won a bronze medal.

Following his hockey playing career in 2020, Callahan remained in professional hockey as a scout and a coach. Currently, Callahan, 35, is an assistant coach for the Minnesota Wilderness (Cloquet, Minnesota) of the North American Hockey League.



# 'Coaches' Corner'

## *Cross Country*

### Mark Gonzales



Mark Gonzales enters his 25th year as head coach of the La Habra High School Cross Country program and also serves as an assistant coach with the Track & Field team. A 1991 graduate of La Habra High School, Gonzales was a standout distance runner for the Highlanders in both cross country and track. His time of 9:07.51 in the 3200 meters,

set in 1991, still stands as a La Habra High School record more than three decades later.

Following high school, Gonzales continued his cross country and track career at the University of Minnesota, where he earned a degree in Kinesiology with a minor in Coaching. While in college, he met his future wife, Mutsumi, who was an international student from Japan. After graduation, Gonzales moved with her to Osaka, Japan, where he taught English at an all-boys high school from 1997 to 2002. The couple married in Osaka in 2002 before returning to the United States later that year.

Upon returning home, Gonzales began working at La Habra High School as a substitute teacher before earning his teaching credential. He has since spent his career teaching mathematics at La Habra while coaching generations of Highlander student-athletes in cross country and track and field. His deep knowledge of distance running, dedication to his athletes, and passion for the sport have made him an important part of La Habra Athletics for more than two decades. Gonzales was born in Gardena and raised in La Habra. Today, he and his wife live in Fullerton with their two children, Kai and Mia.

Favorite Sports: Track and UFC/MMA

Favorite Food: Japanese curry

Favorite Athlete: Haile Gebrselassie, the legendary Ethiopian distance runner and two-time Olympic gold medalist in the 10,000 meters

Hobbies: Reading fiction, music, board games, Magic: The Gathering, and physics

Favorite Movie: The Lord of the Rings





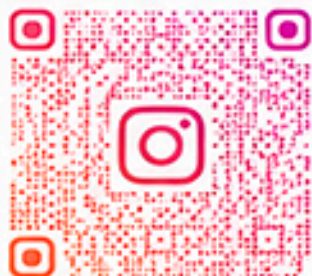
# La Habra HIGHLANDERS

*FOLLOW OUR TEAMS*

★ ON INSTAGRAM! ★

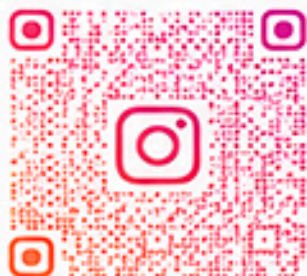


**WATER POLO, BOYS**



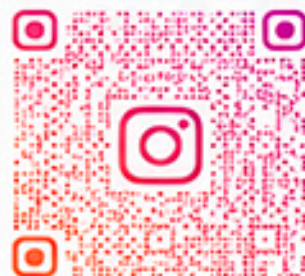
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**SONG**



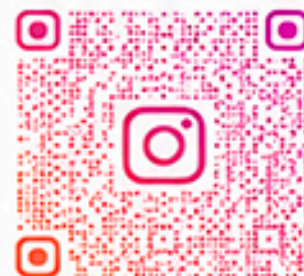
LHSSONG

**CHEER**



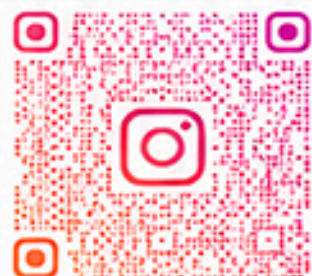
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**WRESTLING, BOYS & GIRLS**



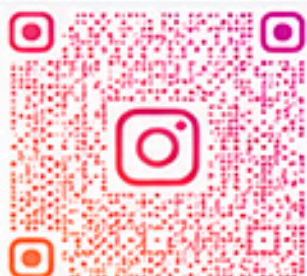
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**GOLF, BOYS & GIRLS**



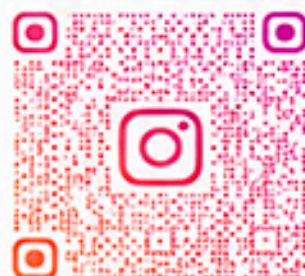
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**CROSS-COUNTRY /  
TRACK & FIELD, BOYS & GIRLS**



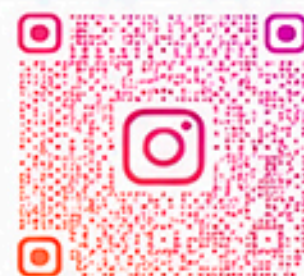
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**TENNIS, BOYS**



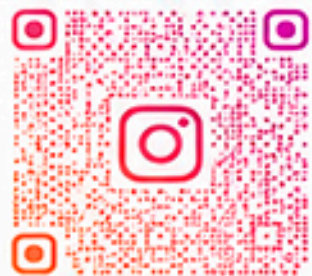
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**FLAG FOOTBALL**



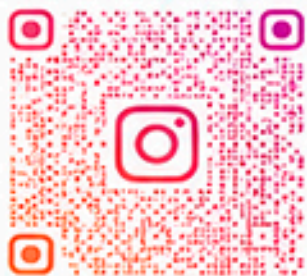
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**FOOTBALL  
(11 PERSON)**



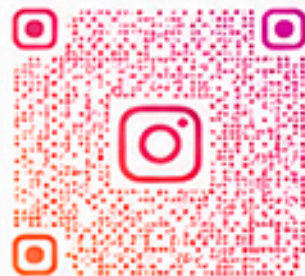
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**BASEBALL**



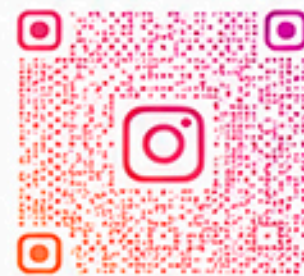
LAHABRABASEBALL

**SOFTBALL**



LAHABRASOFTBALL

**VOLLEYBALL, GIRLS**



LHHS.GIRLSBASKETBALL

**VOLLEYBALL, BOYS**



LHHS\_BOYSBASKETBALL

**BASKETBALL, BOYS**



LAHABRABOYSBASKETBALL

**BASKETBALL, GIRLS**



LHHS.GIRLSBASKETBALL

**SOCCER, BOYS**



TBA

**SOCCER, GIRLS**



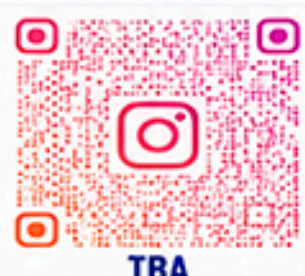
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**WATER POLO, GIRLS**



LAHABRAGIRLSWATERPOLO

**TRACK & FIELD,  
BOYS & GIRLS**



TBA

**SWIM & DIVE**



LAHABRASWIMANDDIVE

## #WEBLEEDBLUE



# Highlanders

LA HABRA

## COACHES

2026-27



★ <https://lahabra.homecampus.com/> ★

| SPORT                                         | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | EMAIL                         |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------------|
| ATHLETIC DIRECTOR                             | CAFFREY   | PAUL       | pcaffrey@fjuhsd.org           |
| ASSISTANT AD                                  | WALLIS    | JASON      | jwallis@fjuhsd.org            |
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| GOLF, BOYS & GIRLS                            | VERDUGO   | CODY       | cverdugo@fjuhsd.org           |
| SOCCER, BOYS                                  | TBA       | TBA        | TBA                           |
| SOCCER, GIRLS                                 | GONZALEZ  | DIEGO      | dgonzalezdominguez@fjuhsd.org |
| SOFTBALL                                      | MORALES   | ROBERT     | rmorales@fjuhsd.org           |
| TENNIS, BOYS                                  | MARSHALL  | DEREK      | dmarshall@fjuhsd.org          |
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| TRACK & FIELD,<br>BOYS & GIRLS                | TBA       | TBA        | TBA                           |
| VOLLEYBALL, GIRLS                             | HERRERA   | ZOE        | zherrera@fjuhsd.org           |
| VOLLEYBALL, BOYS                              | TBA       | TBA        | TBA                           |
| WATER POLO, BOYS                              | CARTY     | MITCH      | mcarty@fjuhsd.org             |
| WATER POLO, GIRLS                             | MOLTHEN   | WEDGE      | wmolthen@fjuhsd.org           |
| WRESTLING, BOYS & GIRLS                       | GONZALEZ  | ALEXANDER  | agonzalez@fjuhsd.org          |

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