



Cross Country Coaches Handbook *A guide for new coaches and volunteers.*

How to score a XC Meet

In cross-country it takes five good runners to win, but seven runners make the team great! The team score is the top five places added together for a team score. The team with the lowest score wins.

Example #1

Team A: 2-4-5-7-9= 27

Team B: 1-3-6-8-10= 28

The #6 and #7 runners do not add their place into the team score. They can affect the other team scores if they place ahead of any of the opponent's top 5. When this happens, they effectively **displace** the other teams scoring runners, and increasing their score.

Teams that have a tie score have it broken by awarding the victory to the team having the highest 6th place finisher. In the case below, Team A's #6 runner is not only a displacing runner, he/she is a tie-breaker and wins the meet for Team A.

Example #2

Team A: 3-4-5-7-9 (10) = 28

Team B: 1-2-6-8-11 (12) = 28

Often there are cases where competitors may not be part of a "full team" (at least 5 runners). If a school doesn't have at least 5 runners, then they are running as individuals and don't count for team scores. This is often the case in championship races and invitational meets. Therefore, when scoring, there are two sets of places for runners.

The individual placing, which includes all runners, and the team placing, which ranks only those runners that are part of a complete team.

Example #3

- 1st place – A (From Team A)
- 2nd Place – B (From Team B)
- 3rd Place – C (Not a Complete Team)
- 4th Place – D (From Team A)
- 5th Place – E (Not a Complete Team)
- 6th Place – F (From Team B)
- 7th Place – G (From Team B)
- 8th Place – H (From Team B)
- 9th Place – I (From Team A)
- 10th Place – J (From Team A)
- 11th Place – K (From Team B)
- 12th Place – L (From Team A)

Team A: 1-3-7-8-10 = 29

Team B: 2-4-5-6-9 = 26

A score of 15 points is the equivalent of a shut-out in other sports. If team A places runners in 1st-5th place, they will score 15 points. In a dual meet team A has all 7 in before Team B, then the score would be 15-50.

This is a good thing to explain to parents. Many do not understand the scoring and may never ask.

Terminology

Dual Meet: A cross country meet between two teams, usually in the same league.

Double Dual or Tri meet: A meet with three teams where the scores are tabulated between only two teams at a time. Example: Teams A vs. B, teams A vs. C, and then teams B vs. C. Only the runners between the two teams are scored, with the others not counting in the placing.

Invitational Meet: Larger meets that are often held on Saturdays. These are open to teams by invitation or request, and not regularly scheduled as part of a league schedule.

Sub-District-A meet where the only purpose is to advance to regional or district competition. This meet has no bearing on final league standing.

Varsity Team: By rule a varsity team is a minimum of seven and a maximum of 9 runners.

Junior Varsity: Any runner who is not on the varsity. Junior Varsity races often have teams of unlimited size, although the same rules for scoring (first 5 runners) and displacement (runners 6 & 7) still apply.

** There are many different configurations that occur in league races. In some races, all athletes of the same gender run together with the first 7 on a team counting as varsity. Some sub district or league meets may run more than 7 runners as well. Often there may be separate varsity and Junior Varsity races for boys, while the girls races are combined. This is due to some girls teams having less than complete Junior Varsity or even Varsity teams.*

WSCCCA: Washington State Cross Country Coaches Association. The Cross Country branch of the Washington Coaches Association.

WIAA: Washington Interscholastic Activities Association. This is the organization in charge of all High School and Junior High athletics and activities. Their headquarters are in Renton. Their website is wiaa.com

NFHS: National Federation of State High School Associations. This is the body that generate the rules and regulations for high school sports.

Dead Time/Out of Season: That is the period from the end of cross country season to the end of Spring high school sports, and again from the end of August to the beginning of Cross Country Season when teams may not hold formal practices with their coaches or parent volunteers. General conditioning is allowed on a year round basis however. Please consult the WIAA handbook for a specific guidelines on conditioning programs.

Course layouts

Courses should be designed in accordance with WIAA & NFHS. Courses shall be 1.5 to 3.1 miles in length (Measurements are taken along the middle of the course). When measuring a course, a surveyors wheel is the most accurate method. However, you must walk with the wheel. Running causes some bounce, ending up with a course that will usually run "long." A GPS can be used for initial layout, but generally is not as accurate. GPS points may be 3-15 meters off, so over the course of 3.1 miles, there is significant room for error. Course layout shall be in such that the course is clearly marked at every turn, intersection, start & finish. The host should provide maps and explain course markers.

The starting area should be wide enough to accommodate all teams (rule of thumb is 6' per team). A cone or marker should be placed 100 meters from the start. That marks the zone for a recall of the start due to an athlete falling down and impeding other athletes. Additionally, the start should progress several hundred meters before any sharp corners or narrowing of the course. The last part of the course (150 yards straightaway) would end at the finish line. The finish area should be 15' wide and come down into a cone shape (30" wide). It's recommended that the finish line is roped off, and all stakes are padded or covered at the top. Old tennis balls work nicely. The finish line should be adequate for the size of the meets being held. A minimum would be 100 feet long with the flagging about 40" in height. The NFHS rulebook has specific layout information for the finish lines. Rainbow Racing Systems have an excellent free Guide For Race Directors. It can be found on their website, rainbowracing.com

When designing the course consider the following points. Is it fair (even balance of hills, flat, etc.). Can spectators view a reasonable portion of the race? Are there ample opportunities to pass? Is it fun? Not many athletes want to run loops around the

ball fields, nor do they want to head out down a trail for a mile and a half and then turn around.

Bear in mind the athletes safety, and the size of the meets that will be held on the course. Bear in mind that a steep hill may be suitable for running uphill, but unsafe for athletes coming down. Avoid hazards such as tight downhill turns, obstacles, prolonged narrow stretches, etc. Whenever possible try to run over a proposed course to see how it will

If your course is off site, develop positive relationship with those who manage or own the property. Make them your allies so you aren't surprised by sudden changes to your course or the regulations for its use.

If possible, a large finish banner and digital clock at the finish are excellent additions. The finish make it easy for the athletes to see and the clock lets they and the spectators know what their time is. Often local running clubs have digital clocks that they will share for high school meets. If possible, somebody should be at the mile as well to read of the teams of the runners as they pass.

Running a meet

Ours is a sport that generally requires the coach of a host handle all aspects of a meet. This means scoring, set-up, procuring volunteers, sending results to the papers, and more. Here are some tips for organizing a two or three way meet. These are suggested minimums. You may be able to get away with less, or use a lot more. A lot depends on the amount of time and volunteers you have for set up.

Basic Materials:

- Printing stopwatch with extra paper and fresh batteries.
- Back-up stopwatch (a good running clock with split functions will work).
- Spray chalk (not paint), flour, or athletic chalk and a chalk machine for marking the course. Spray chalk is the easiest.
- 200 feet of flagging. Store it on "wire reels" for ease. They can be had for free from many hardware or electrical supply stores.
- Posts for the flagging. There are numerous types available. Simple rebar works well. If using re-bar or metal posts, put old tennis balls on the top for safety.
- Cones (you can always use them somewhere)
- Surveyors flags. Place them along the course where they may be areas of confusion.
- Score sheets. For dual meets, a simple score sheet with three carbonless copies works very well. They can be created at most school district print shops. If power is available, a laptop and printer work even better.
- Starters pistol and shells (or air horn).
- Megaphone
- Tags and spindles for giving place position tags at the finish. These can be made with index cards and coat hangers.

Personnel:

One of the keys to a good meet is a good crew. Don't try to do it all yourself. Ask for help. Often there are a lot of people out there willing to get involved. Parents in particular can be a great source. A local running club, former coaches and athletes, and school staff can also be assets. Finally, check to see if there are any track official in your area. They are usually happy to come help, particularly as starters or heading the finish.

- Starter
- Head timer
- Assistant/back-up timer
- Finish line judge
- 2-3 people in the finish chute to move athletes through.
- Tag collector/finish placer. This person gives the placement tags to athletes at they finish.
- Scorekeeper

Uniform

Check with WIAA & NFHS on all uniform rules. All athletes are required to wear shoes, and school issued uniforms. Jewelry is not allowed in most cases. The exceptions are watches, medal alert tags & religious symbols which must be worn in accordance with the WIAA & NFHS. Anything worn under the uniform must be of one color. If more than one person on team has one something showing under their uniform, then everyone must be in same color.

Treating Injuries—R.I.C.E.

The acronym to remember for treating an injury is R.I.C.E. “**R**” stands for rest. A day off or more can help prevent a major injury. “**I**” stands for ice. You can never ice too much. Icing at home a couple of times and at lunch the next day can help prevent injuries. Ice should never be left on for more than 15-20 minutes with 45 minutes off. This can be repeated as often as you would like. “**C**” stands for compression. An ace bandage can help reduce swelling around an injury. “**E**” stands for elevation. Raising the legs above the heart helps reduce swelling and makes them feel refreshed.

If you have the opportunity to give your athletes ice baths after a hard practice, it really can make a difference. Kids swimming pools, old whirl pool baths, watering troughs, and garbage cans work well. Also, local rivers, lakes, Puget Sound, the Pacific Ocean etc. also work well, providing appropriate safety precautions are followed.

Listed below are some common running injuries. This list should only be used as a helpful guide, not as a definitive answer. If your school has a trainer, that is often a good initial source.

- Shin Splints: Pain in the shin or lower leg. Basic treatment of icing, heel walks, toe raises and calf stretches.
- IT Band: Pain in the hip on down to the outside of the knee. Basic treatment. Specific IT band stretches (Beauty Queen) and rolling with an "IT Band Roller.
- Achilles tendonitis: Pain or inflammation in the Achilles. Toe Raises, heel raise, gentle calf stretches.
- Knee pain: There can be several types of knee pain. Generally the cause of the pain is rooted elsewhere. Treatment includes ice, stretching the calves, strengthening the hamstrings and quadriceps.

Here are the Top reasons Runners get Injured:

1. Running in worn out shoes
2. Running in improper shoes
3. Over training/Improper training techniques
4. Lack of strength and flexibility
5. Running on hard surfaces (pavement, concrete, asphalt).
6. Jumping into intense training without building up a mileage base.

Further Education

We strongly recommend that all coaches continue to increase their knowledge base. Here are a few suggestions.

- Reading: Specifically books on exercise physiology and training theory as it relates to distance runners.
- Clinics: There are numerous clinics in our area, including the semi-annual White Pass Coaches Clinic, the Track & XC Coaches Convention, the All Sports, Clinic, and the Northwest Distance Clinic. Several Universities also host coaching clinics. Information for these can be found at watfxc.com
- Camps; When your athletes go to camp, considering attending some sessions as well. Most camps welcome coaches.
- Other Coaches: this is perhaps the best resource of all.

This handbook was created by the Washington State Cross Country Coaches Association with the assistance of Dennis Sheline and David Miller. Please feel free to send any suggestions for this manual to your WSCCCA Advisory Board Member.