

A Parent's Guide to Cross Country

WHAT IS CROSS COUNTRY?

Cross Country is the competitive sport of running that is during the fall season. Training begins in the Summer with the continued training and competition portion beginning in August. Varsity teams consist of 7 runners while the rest of the runners are designated as JV. The runner's grade level has little effect on their varsity and JV status. Although practices can vary, most races in high school are 3 miles or 5K (3.1 miles) long. The courses include trails, grassy areas, hills, etc. that makes running much more fun! There are NO cuts or a bench in cross country...everyone competes every time!

So how do you win? Lowest score wins! The first 5 runners make up the scoring for example, if the scores in a meet with Liberty and Winters Mill are as follows:

Liberty : 1, 3, 6, 8, 10 = 28

Winters Mill : 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 = 27

Winters Mill wins! A team's 6th and 7th runners can also figure into the scoring if they place ahead of the other teams' top 5 finishers. We call them "displacers". In the event of a tie, the 6th runner becomes the tiebreaker.

OUR RUNNING PHILOSOPHY

Everyone is Important: It is a team-wide philosophy that every athlete is vital for success in the program. Running ability is only a portion of the attributes we look at for a team member. Dedication, Effort, and Dependability are also great attributes for each runner to have.

Potential: We strive to help runners reach their potential each season. Our hope is that each runner trains hard to bring out the best in their skills and abilities for the sport.

Have Fun: It's not all about running...it's about teamwork, having fun, and well...running! We run in different locations when we can, runners have pasta parties before meets, and there are many other things that make cross country a great sport!

Inspire a love of running: Without enjoying to run, it's hard to continue training to reach your maximum potential. Our goal as coaches is to allow the runners to become better runners competitively as well as enjoying what they are doing so they can continue running for the rest of their lives!

YOU CAN HELP THEM PREPARE!

Buy Running Shoes: There is very little expense to running. No pads, helmets, etc. but a runner's running shoes will keep them healthy throughout the season. We suggest a runner get a new pair of shoes for the start of cross country season. Most running shoes can last 300 miles or more but should not be used for anything but practice to keep them from wearing down too quickly! A great place to buy them is [Run Moore](#), a local running store in Westminster. The owner is a good friend of the

community and will work with you and your runner to put them in the best shoe for their feet! Ask the coaches for help if needed!

Summer Training: When a runner starts training on the first day of practice, there is a lot of growth that can occur from August to October. However, the best way to see MAXIMUM growth and have a runner reach their MAXIMUM potential is to begin training in the Summer months (June through August). We strongly encourage your runner to follow a training plan that has been made for them. Usually it's a very simple plan based on time and miles to get a runner prepared for the expectations in August. Without sufficient training, there is a higher chance of injury and soreness that we want to minimize. With running, it's also important for a student to maintain a healthy and well-balanced diet so they can replenish fluids and nutrients that they need from the increase in exercise. Runners tend to eat a lot of pasta!

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL

What does it take to be successful? Sure, talent is important but that's just a very small piece of what makes a good runner and teammate!

More than anything, cross country takes time. Time to learn; time to train; time to sleep, rest, and recover. This includes after-school, during weekends, summer days, and time away from other things they could be doing. With any student-athlete, you will notice that their days become busy with schoolwork and athletics. Academics will always be the most important thing and it's important to strive for a healthy balance with all things during the season. We emphasize excellence in academics. Not only will this show that they work hard in the classroom but it shows dedication that you can carry out onto the course.

Commitment is key. Attending team practices each day is what we expect. They are scheduled at the same time regularly to keep to a routine. Without regular practice, athletes will become under-trained and not perform at their highest potential. Communication is also important. If there is an illness, injury, or problem on the team, we ask our runners to communicate with the coaches directly. We expect to hear it from them and not someone else that they are not going to be at practice for some reason. We hold them to high standards of what is expected from them and it's important they work to reach them on a continual basis. High school sports are a great place for your runners to learn about these great attributes that they should strive for throughout their lives.

XC VOCABULARY

Have no clue what everyone is talking about? Here's a cheat-sheet of some XC (cross-country) vocabulary terms that you'll begin to hear!

- Invitational: a larger meet with many teams
- Course: the place where the running takes place
- Starting Box: where the team has been assigned to start the race
- Finish Chute: where the runners finish after the finish line
- Pace: running speed over a particular distance
- Surge: a tactical increase in pace during a race
- Kick: a burst of speed at the finish of a race

Pack: a group of runners in close proximity

PR: personal record

Spikes: shoes that runners use to race (only for race-days)

Warm-up: running and stretching routine before harder running

Cool-down: running/jogging that allows muscles to calm themselves after hard effort

Workout: a daily training session that includes harder running

There are MANY more! Feel free to ask if you are curious...

THE FIRST RACE!

Runners are very nervous at their first race, whether it's their first race ever or first race of the season, they all will have some nerves. Try to get them to the race hydrated and ready to go, the coaches will take care of the rest! For your first race of WATCHING cross country, there are some things you should know...

1. When you arrive, scope out the course. You'll find arrows, flags, markers, etc. Try to find several good places to watch the race and cheer on your runner (and their teammates)! Also locate the start and finish.
2. Don't worry about your runner before the race. The runners have a strict timeline to follow and are focused on doing the best they can during that day. They are usually going through a routine of warm-up, stretching, and focusing on what they need to do before the race. You may be surprised at the intensity they may show before the race.
3. During the race, feel free to move around to cheer on the runners. You'll see the coaches running from point to point to offer encouragement. However, rules forbid you running alongside your runner, let them run their race.
4. When they are finished, wait until your runner has made their way out of the finish chute. They should be tired, they may have some trouble walking (rubber legs), and may be breathing very hard from the effort. Feel free to offer them water/Gatorade and then point them towards the team tent. If they need more attention for any reason, there is usually a medical trainer available or a coach nearby. Please ask them for help as we are trained to handle runners and their recovery.
5. After the runner has finished, they are expected to complete a cool-down that will usually be led by the captains. Please allow them to stick to their schedule.
6. Once the meet is over, a student may only ride home with a parent if they have a note from the parent stating that they may do so. The note also has to be shown to an administrator at the school and signed before we are allowed to release them. We suggest, unless absolutely necessary, that the runners come home on the bus. It's a great bonding experience with the rest of the time traveling to and from meets.

If you have any questions throughout the season, please feel free to ask the coaches. We're looking forward to having a great season!!