

“Cross Country 101”

Is this the first season you are involved in Cross Country? Are you still trying to figure out the sport? Below are some commonly asked questions:

Where are Cross Country meets held? Cross Country meets are typically held on a college campus or a city/county park. Most high schools do not have a course on the school property so they are not able to accommodate a Cross Country meet on the school property. Cross Country meets are hosted either by the college where the meet is held or by a high school at a local park.

How many teams compete in a Cross Country meet? A Cross Country meet can have as few as 2-3 teams or as many as 50-100 teams. The host of the meet will determine how many teams they can accommodate based on the course, surrounding area for team tents, and volunteers to support the meet. The Fulton County Championship meet will only include schools from Fulton County. The Region meet will only include schools from our region.

What meets are most important? All meets are important but the most important are the Region Meet and the State Meet at the end of the season. These are like “play off” games in other sports. The Region Meet is important because it determines what schools qualify for the State Meet. The top 4 teams in the Varsity races at the Region Meet qualify to participate in the State Meet. In addition, a runner may qualify to participate in the State Meet as an individual (regardless of whether or not the team qualifies) by placing in the top 6 in the varsity race at the Region Meet. The State Meet is very exciting as it determines the final ranking of the teams for the season. To place in the top 10 at State is considered extremely successful.

How long is a Cross Country race? A standard cross country race for high school is 5K which is 3.1 miles.

What is the difference between Cross Country and Track? Cross Country has one event for a runner which is a 5K race. The course for a Cross Country race will be on trails through woods and fields. The surface is usually natural, dirt, or crushed gravel. Track is a different sport and is during the spring season- It has many events including running with various distances. They run around a hard surface track.

What do the team results mean? How are they calculated? What is Varsity vs JV? Races are the Varsity Girls, Varsity Boys, JV Girls and JV Boys. There may be other races in some meets (i.e. Open and middle school, etc.). Each Varsity team (girls and boys) consists of the top 7 runners for most meets. There are some meets, where the Varsity team consists of 10 runners. The coaches decide each week what runners will be running in the Varsity races for girls and boys and inform the team at practice. Runners on the Varsity team may change from week to week based on last week's results, injuries, etc. Now, for scoring... The top 5 runners in each race for a school score points. The place that a runner gets in a race is the same number of points he/she scores for their school. So, as you can tell, the lower the score, the better. Then these 5 individual scores are added together for the team score. For example, if the top 5 runners out of our 7 Varsity runners come in 1st, 4th, 6th, 13th and 20th then our team score for that race would be 44 (1+4+6+13+20). If a team sweeps coming in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th, the score would be 15 (1+2+3+4+5) which would be a perfect score. But that rarely happens. If there is a tie between teams, the 6th runner is the tie breaker. Now, even if a runner does not come in the first 5 for our team, they can still be VERY important for the scoring process. Runners who don't place in the top 5 may place before other team's runners thus making the other team have a higher score. Therefore, as many runners as we have coming in close behind our top 5 runners creates a higher score for opponents.

What time do runners have to be at school for a meet? All runners must meet at the school and ride the team buses to every meet. The coaches will notify team a couple of days before each meet. This information will have details for the meet including meeting times, race schedule, Varsity runners, directions and an estimated time the buses will return. The coaches will look at the race schedule which is decided by the host team to determine what time the buses will leave. They like to be at the meet venue 1 ½ hours before our first race so that they have time to set up and the runners in the first race have time to warm up. Many runners get very nervous before their race so it is important that they have ample time to prepare (both mentally and physically). Each meet will have its own race schedule. Typically, the order of the races is Varsity girls, Varsity boys, JV girls and then JV boys (but not always). In general, the buses leave very early in the morning for meets (as early as 5:30 AM or as late as 7:30 AM) and return in the afternoon. One exception to this is usually the Fulton County meet at Webb Bridge Park which is typically in the late. Our webmaster will also put some of this information on the web site.

Are Meets optional? No, meets are not optional. Every runner is expected to run every race, with the exception of a few (ie. State). Even if a runner is injured, he/she can attend the meet and cheer on the team. Cheering for others on the

team is a big part of our team. It makes a difference to the runners to have fans along the course cheering them on. Boys are expected to cheer on the girls and vice versa.

How do runners line up to start a race? Each team is assigned a starting box on the start line at every meet. The team is required to start in their assigned box. The starting boxes are usually small thus only a few runners from each team will get to line up on the start line. The remaining runners will line up behind those on the start line. The coaches along with the team captains determine who will get to start on the start line taking into consideration the size of the race, location of the starting box, geography of the start area, etc.

What do runners do about food at the meets? Do they need money? We will have a snack and drink committee. The Booster Club pays for these snacks. However, even with drinks, bagels, bananas, etc. at the meet, every runner should bring a water bottle to every meet. They need to be hydrating way before the coolers are set up at the meet. Most runners do not eat several hours before their race. However, if their race is not until 12:30 and they load the bus at 6:00 AM, they may eat in the morning. Below you will find more information about Do's and Don'ts for runners before a meet. After the runner's race, the runners often eat a meal either at the meet or on the way home from a meet. For some meets, the buses stop on the way home at a fast food restaurant to eat. Runners should bring money for either concessions or eating on the way home. In addition, most meets have t-shirts for sale at the meet. Many runners buy the t-shirts and then wear them on Monday to school. T-shirts are usually around \$15-\$20.

Do runners need spikes? Most runners' race in a pair of shoes called spikes. Spikes have plates on the bottom for removable metal spikes that helps with traction during a race. In addition, spikes are very light weight. Spikes are not required and some runners will wear regular training shoes for races. Runners who wear spikes during a race only wear them during the actual race. Runners will wear regular training shoes to the meet and bring their spikes in their bag and change shoes before their race. With the metal spikes on the bottom, these shoes should not be worn on pavement. Buy them when you buy your training shoes to avoid low inventory during the season.

What do runners wear to meets? Runners wear their uniform to meets. You will find that many runners will sleep on the bus to the meet. Runners can wear whatever they would like over their uniform but often will wear pajama pants & t-shirts (or pajama pants & sweat shirts when it is cold). There may be a couple meets that runners may want a pair of gloves to wear. They will also bring a bag with their spikes (if you plan to wear spikes), extra shirt, personal snacks, water bottle, and money for snacks & lunch at the meet. Some will bring an iPod to listen to music on the bus and also while "hanging out" under the tent. You will also find many runners will bring a pillow (and a blanket when it gets colder).

What do parents do at meets? Parents typically look at the race schedule that is listed on the meet information sheet to see what time their own child is running. Parents do not usually go as early as the buses but arrive at the meet in time to see the race(s) that interest them. The runners will keep their bags, pillows, etc. under our tent. Parents may want to bring a folding chair to use while waiting in between races. The runners usually sit on the ground (on tarps which are set up by the team). Parents can look for the tents to find the team and then watch the races and cheer on the runners from various points along the course. Do not attempt to "run with" any runner during a race to help pace the runner. A runner will be disqualified if anyone outside of the race runs alongside a runner as it will be interpreted as helping with pacing. If you are at the site early enough, you can always help setting up the food table and cutting bagels, fruit, etc. Toward the end of the meet, they can use help cleaning up and putting everything away. Just ask and they will let you know how you can help.

What if a runner has an inhaler? If a runner has an inhaler, he/she should run the race with the inhaler. Do not keep the inhaler in your bag at the tent. The tent can often be a very long distance from where you need the inhaler.

Below are some Do's and Don'ts for runners before, during and after a race:

Thursday & Friday before a meet

DO drink plenty of fluid to hydrate your body. It will be too late to try to hydrate on Saturday morning. Drink only hydrating fluids such as water and PowerAde. Avoid drinks with caffeine and a lot of sugar such as soft drinks.

DO have a high carb dinner after practice on Friday night. Pasta is a perfect choice.

DO put spikes in your shoes if you plan to wear spikes.

Saturday – Before the race

If you eat anything before the race, eat something light and at least 1 ½ hours before your race time so your body has time to digest your food.

DO wear your XC uniform. There will be race officials at each meet and they require teams to have the same uniform.

DO NOT wear any jewelry with the exception of a watch.

DO make sure to get your inhaler if you have an inhaler.

DO arrive at the designated meeting time.

DO your warm up run & stretches with the team.

DO make sure you are at the starting line at least 10 minutes before race time for check in.

DO line up in the appropriate starting box.

Saturday – During the race

DO run with your inhaler if you have one.

DO cheer on your fellow Gladiators when you are not racing. Spread out on the course so you are not all in one place.

DO run hard!

Saturday – At the Finish Line

DO stay in the order of finish as you move through the chute. If there are multiple runners crossing the finish line at the same time, listen to the race official who will be calling out who crossed first. There will be race volunteers to help you stay in order through the chute.

DO keep moving in the chute once you cross the finish line. There will be race officials helping those runners who need help through the chute but you must keep moving in the chute. Otherwise the chute will backup and interfere with runners crossing the finish line.

DO take a place card at the end of the chute.

DO keep walking around after your run and drink water.

DO help your fellow runners when they exit the chute that need help walking.

DO put your name and school on the place card and turn it in to the school representative collecting cards. These cards are necessary for scoring the race.

Saturday – After the races

DO collect your personal items and help clean up the tent area.

DO make sure to “sign out” if you are not riding the team bus home.