

XC for Dummies

BASIC RULES:

Team makeup – A Cross Country team is made up of seven runners. The top five runners are the “scoring” members and the remaining two have the important job of displacing the scorers on opposing teams. Only the varsity level is limited to seven competitors in a race, the other levels have unlimited entries.

Levels of competition – There are four levels in most cross-country races. Each level competes in its own race and is scored separately. Most invitational races and our league meets use the following levels: Varsity, Junior Varsity, Sophomore, and Freshman. Some invitationals will use a grade-level format. For these types of races, there is no Varsity team. The races are scored independently and sometimes the top five times from each team are compiled to determine an overall winner.

Scoring – Races are scored by assigning a point value for the place a runner finishes in. If a runner finishes first, he/she will earn 1 point. Finishing 55th would earn 55 points. Cross Country is like golf in that the lowest score wins. A perfect score is 15 points, with the top five runners occupying the first five finishing positions. Runners who do not have a full team are removed from the results for team scoring. This happens quite often at larger races. Big invitationals and championship races are often won with point totals close to 100.

Race length – Most races are either three miles or five kilometers long. Occasionally a course will measure slightly short or long. Some courses are limited by their geography and the distances are kept consistent from year to year. For example, Mt. Sac is always 2.93 miles. This is the most challenging course of the season, so most runners are thankful to not have to run an extra .07 miles.

RUNNING TERMINOLOGY

XC -- Abbreviated form of Cross Country

Runner -- Someone who runs faster than a jog. We do not jog.

CIF -- California Interscholastic Federation

NXN -- Nike Cross Nationals

Invitational -- A large race hosted by one or more schools. They provide better competition and larger fields of competitors.

PR -- Personal Record (time)

PB -- Personal Best (time). Used more commonly in Europe.

Aerobic-- Running at a comfortable pace that keeps you in a heart-rate zone of 60-80% of your max.

Anaerobic-- Short, intense running that does not rely on the body's ability to process oxygen.

VO2 Max -- Short work bouts lasting from 3-5 minutes. Usually part of an interval workout.

Threshold -- Refers to aerobic threshold training. Usually running for 15 to 30 minutes at a pace that is one minute slower per mile than your current mile PR.

Intervals -- Segmented running one at varying intensities. Intervals can be any distance but are most commonly between 200m and 2 miles.

Recovery -- Runs that allow athletes to rest after a hard effort. These runs are done by feel and do not have a prescribed pace.

Surge -- A short burst of speed during a race. Used to change rhythm or break the competition.

Splits -- Times associated with standard checkpoints in a race or workout. Ex: mile splits.

Kick -- The sprint at the end of a race. Runners all have different abilities to kick.

Strides -- Moderately fast runs lasting between 50-200m. The focus is on form during these runs.