

CROSS COUNTRY

Frequently Asked Questions



What is Cross Country?

Overview

Cross country is a running sport that takes place outside on varying terrains in which teams attempt to complete a course faster than one another.

Origins

Cross country originated in England from the Crick Run, held every year since its origin in 1837. It has grown to be a popular participatory sport in junior and high school, as well as at colleges. Courses generally stretch 5 kilometers, or approximately 3.1 miles.

The Warm-Up

Before racing, teams will take part in moderate warm-up runs followed by thorough stretching.

Beginning of the Race

Races usually begin at a course's starting point, which is generally out in the open area of a field. Each team is allotted an equal amount of space along the starting line, sometimes enough to fit an entire team. A race official will then sound a gun, whistle, horn or other audible device to signal the start of the race. At this point, runners take off, attempting to establish a good position while maintaining a competitive pace.

The Courses

Courses are marked to create boundaries in which runners are required to stay. Miles are marked, as well, to allow runners to pace themselves. Courses generally wind through wooded areas and culminate in an open, visible setting.

The End

The course ends at a finish line located at the beginning of a *funnel* or *chute* (a long runway marked with flags) that keeps athletes single-file in order of finish and facilitates accurate scoring and observation by race officials. Each team is then scored by using a combined tally of its top five runners. The team with the lowest score



is declared the winner. As far as individual placement, it is decided by where a runner finishes among the pack. Therefore, it is possible a runner could win the race by a wide margin, but see his or her team finish well out of first place if the other runners place further back.

The Cool Down

Following the race, runners rest and engage in a cool down run, similar to their warm up. This is again followed by stretching.

Training

Cross country runners generally train six days per week.

It's All About the Shoes

Runners wear training shoes during practice, but generally wear racing flats, which are lighter-weight shoes, in competitions.

Adapted from "What is Cross Country Running?" by Jon Rineman (123Life.com) and "Cross Country Running" (Wikipedia.com).

What do the letters “XC” stand for?

"XC" is a common abbreviation for Cross (X) Country (C). Another abbreviation is "CC."

What are some terms I'm going to hear during the Cross Country season?

League Cluster Meet: a meet in the middle of the season with all competitor schools in our league.



League Finals Meet: a meet at the end of the season used to determine our league's final standings in all levels.

Invitational Meet: a multi-team meet.

Top 7: the scoring members of a cross country team.

Course: the marked and measured route of the race.

Starting Box: designated area to which a team is assigned on the starting line.

False Start: leaving the starting line before the gun sounds.

Finish Chute: a rope-bordered funnel past the finish line that move runners into their single file order of finish.

Pace: running speed over a particular distance.

Surge: a tactical increase in pace during the race.

Kick: a burst of speed at the finish of a race.

Pack: a group of runners in close proximity.

Personal Record: best-ever performance on a given course. Also known as a "PR".

Racing Flats: special, lightweight shoes designed for racing, rather than daily training.

Training Shoes: running shoes designed for longer wear in daily training.

Warm- Up: a running and stretching routine that gradually warms up the body for intense running.



Cool-Down: a jogging routine that allows the muscles to purge themselves of lactates and the body to gradually lower its temperature to normal.

Workout: a daily training session.

Speed Workout: a more intense training session intended to help adapt to the rigors associated with racing.

Special thanks to AAF/CIF Coaching Program Manual where some of the information contained within was sourced.

