

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CROSS COUNTRY

Congratulations! Your son has joined the Niles West High School Cross Country Team.

WHAT IS CROSS COUNTRY?

Cross country is a team sport that takes place on a measured course (2 to 3 miles) over varied surfaces and terrain. Our home course will be around our athletic fields at Niles West. Many of the away meets are run in parks or forest preserves, please check the cross country website for directions to all our meets.

Cross Country at Niles West is a participation sport, in that everyone has an opportunity to run in every meet up to the state series. In addition to individual racing, participation and personal improvement throughout the season is emphasized. The wonderful thing about running is that it doesn't necessarily require special skills or abilities, simply the determination to show up everyday and run.

Runners who set a personal goal for the season, work hard to achieve that goal, and help their teammates in the process will reap the rewards of being part of a successful team!

HOW CROSS COUNTRY IS SCORED

A cross country meet is scored by each team adding up the places of its top 5 finishers. As in golf, the low score wins. For example, NW runs against NN and their finish places are as follows:

<u>NILES WEST WOLVES</u>	<u>NILES NORTH VIKINGS</u>
1	2
4	3
5	7
6	8
10	9
SCORE 26	SCORE 29
(NILES WEST WINS!)	

If there is a tie after the first five runners, the place of the sixth runner is added to the team total to determine which team finishes higher. In a quad meet (for our CSL North conference), the score is figured separately for each combination of teams (i.e. Team A vs. Team B, Team A vs. Team C, and Team B vs. Team C).

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

More than anything else, success in cross country takes time....time to learn; time to train; time to sleep, rest and recover; after school time; weekend time; time away from family and friends; and time away from other interests. With the academic responsibilities of being a high school student, most student athletes are busy all the time. The willingness to devote the time that success demands is called **DEDICATION**.

Finally, **communication** with the coaches is also essential to success. If a conflict or illness arises, and a runner needs to miss a practice or meet, it is expected that the runner or a parent will communicate directly with one of the coaches. Hearing about an absence from a friend is not acceptable.

HOW TO BUY RUNNING SHOES

The best way to prolong the life and function of a new pair of running shoes is to wear them for running only, not as school shoes or for P. E. class. As far as running clothes, there is no specific running attire that is better than plain old gym shorts and T-shirts, but it is certainly not a necessity to purchase these items. If it is a toss-up between buying good shoes for training and spikes for racing versus "high-tech" running clothing, stick with the shoes so your son can train properly everyday by having the correct footwear. The school will issue warm ups and a uniform for the meets once the season begins, please make sure these items get home to the laundry room frequently as the locker room can be a bit unpleasant after a few weeks of practice.

CROSS COUNTRY VOCABULARY

DUAL OR QUAD MEET: a competition with 2 or 3 other teams.

INVITATIONAL MEET: a competition normally with 6 or more teams and awards for top finishers and teams.

TOP 7: the scoring runners on 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.

FINISH CHUTE: a roped/flagged funnel past the finish line that keeps the runners in order after they finish.

KICK: a burst of speed when the runners near the finish area.

PACK: a group of runners from the same team working together to keep each other on pace during a race or workout.

RACING SPIKES: special, lightweight shoes designed for racing, rather than daily training.

WARM-UP: a running and stretching routine that gradually warms up the body for more intense running or racing.

COOL-DOWN: a slower paced run that allows the muscles to purge themselves of lactates and the body to gradually lower its temperature to normal.

PREPARING TO WATCH A CROSS COUNTRY MEET

When you arrive at the meet site, stop by our team camp (**BIG RED** or **BLACK TENT**) and check out the course map that we have posted for the runners. First locate the start and finish, then try to scout central points where you can see as much of the race with as little moving around as possible. Be aware that our conference meets can feature up to five races that last about 2 hours. Saturday invitational meets have as many as 20-50 teams and a schedule of races that lasts all morning. Your runner(s) will be informed ahead of time what race he will be in, what time the meet will be over, and what time the team will return to school.

To help recovery, water or gatorade is the best thing to drink immediately after a race. Once an away meet is over, we expect all athletes to return to school on the bus. The coaches use this time to review the races and give instructions for upcoming meets and practices. All team members must ride the bus to and from away meets. If an unusual circumstance arises, a parent may provide transportation if the coach is notified and a parental note is received and approved by the Athletic Director on the day prior to the competition. You need to know that Niles West athletes are not allowed to drive themselves to a meet, and afterward, we can release them only to you. Also, you may not take another student/athlete with you, as you are only allowed to transport your son(s) home from the meets.

Thanks in advance for your support, and we look forward to a great season!