

Parents Cross Country Guide
By Coach Jager
Grand Rapids Christian High School
2008-2009 Season

Congratulations, your son or daughter has chosen to run cross country. We are a no cut sport. We are happy to have the competitive runner, and those who run only for conditioning. Cross country at Grand Rapids Christian is without question one of the most successful sports at Christian High. We have been blessed with large numbers and good student leadership. We strive to put a program together that includes things other than running. Most of these extra things, like Bible study, are optional. What follows is a guide for you, the parent so you are aware of what will happen this season.

What is Cross Country?

Cross Country is a 5000 meter race. (Also called a 5k. It is about 3.1 miles.) It takes place over a variety of terrain. Golf courses and parks are favorite venues. Some courses are hilly; others are flat. Cross country races are not easily canceled, so be prepared for cold or rainy races.

How is Cross Country Scored?

A cross country race is scored by each team adding the place of their top 5 runners. A runner simply scores his race place. For example, the first runner scores one point, the eighth runner scores eight points. The low score wins. For example, a race with a score of 26 - 29 would look like this:

Christian High	Catholic Central
1	2
4	3
5	7
6	8
10	9
Score 26	29

(Christian Wins!)

A team's 6th and 7th runner can also figure in the scoring if they place ahead of the other team's 5th runner. When that is the case, they become "pushers" by pushing up their opponents scores, as follows:

Christian High	Catholic Central
2	1
3	4
6	5

8	7
9(10)(11)	12
28	29

(Christian Wins!)

Only a team's 6th and 7th runners can be "pushers" regardless of how many of it's runners may finish ahead of an opposing teams top 5 runners. In the event there is a tie after the first 5 runners are scored, the tie is broken by adding the sixth runners on the tied teams.

Levels of Competition

Grand Rapids Christian is a new member of the OK White Conference. Other members are:

Creston, East Grand Rapids, Greenville, Lowell, and Northview.

Our league has separate girls and boys

races. At the time of this note, it is not yet known if there will be a separate JV race or, as was the case last year, if all boys will run in one race, and all girls in another race.

The OK White runs Jamboree style meets instead of a typical dual meet. A jamboree is simply a meet in which the entire conference runs together. It is scored as any multi-team meet would be. There are 4 jamborees during the season. Each is counted equally toward the conference championship.

A schedule for the 2008 season is now available. Be sure to get one from coach Jager. (GR Christian will once again host the regional meet at the Christian Reformed Rec. Center. Please consider working at this event. The regional meet is October 25.)

Cross Country Lingo

Dual Meet.....A meet between 2 teams

Triangular Meet..... A meet between 3 teams

Invitational Meet..... A multi-team meet

Top 7..... The scoring members of a team

Course..... The marked and measured route of the race

Starting Box..... A designated area to which a team is assigned on the start line

False Start..... Leaving the starting line before the gun sounds

Finish Chute..... A roped area just past the finish line that places runners in order

Pace..... running speed over a measured distance

Surge..... A tactical increase in pace during the race

Kick..... A burst of speed at the finish of the race

Personal Record..... Best ever performance on a given course(PR)
Racing Flats..... A special light weight shoe used during races but not training runs
Training Flats..... Running shoes designed for daily training
Spikes..... A special light weight racing shoe with spikes.
Workout..... A daily training sessions
Lactates..... A by-product of fast running that accumulates in muscles
Warm-up..... A running and stretching routine designed to warm the body temp.
Cool-down..... A jogging and stretching routine designed to purge the muscles of lactates and gradually lower the body temp.
Pack..... A group of several runners, running together during a race
Aerobic..... Exercising without going into oxygen debt
Anaerobic..... Exercising at a rate that puts the body into oxygen debt

What Equipment Do Runners Need?

Runners can use a torn t-shirt and a pair of old shorts, but must have a good pair of running shoes. A runner's shoes are critical to an injury free season. Running shoes should be replaced about every 300 miles. Although the uppers appear good, a shoe with more than 300 miles are often worn on the bottom. Your son or daughter should try to keep a log of their running, so have them note the date of a new shoe purchase in their log. Although we check the shoes of our athletes on a regular basis, with 100 plus members on our team, we can still miss worn shoes on an athlete until they complain of leg pain. Please monitor your child's shoes with us. Shoes should be bought at a store that deals primarily with running footwear and apparel. These stores typically have runners on staff and can recommend a shoe that will be good for the shape of your child's foot. (Gazelle Sports is a great runners store.) The life of running shoes can be extended by using them for running only.

For our meets, each team member will be issued a school uniform, and a pair of school sweats. These must be turned in at the conclusion of the season.

What Does it Take to be Successful?

More than anything, cross country takes time. Time to learn, train, sleep, rest, recover, race, time after school, time on weekends, etc. The willingness to give this time is called dedication. The best distance runners train year round.

By joining Grand Rapids Christian cross country, there are other expectations and responsibilities. We expect each team member to be at practice every day. We practice from 3:00 to 5:00. Going to work is not an acceptable excuse to leave practice early. Doing what is expected is called commitment. We have team goals to develop team loyalty and individual responsibility and accountability. High school sports can provide a

great place for maturity and growth. We hope you parents can appreciate and support our team goals. Please ask your son or daughter to see a complete list of our goals. (This will be given to each athlete during the first few days of the season and discussed at camp.)

We also expect communication. If a problem or injury forces your child to miss practice, we expect him or her to tell us about it personally. Do not relay the message through a teammate or friend. Before each practice we have a meeting where the team is informed of anything about cross country. We discuss what time a bus or van will leave, the start of a race, team strategy, and other things. It is important not to miss these meetings even if your child is injured. We need everyone there each day.

How Can You Help Your Child Before the Season Starts?

To be their best, cross country runners must run in the “off season”. It is essential to build a fitness base before we enter the competitive season. Many runners meet at coach Jager’s house at 8:00 AM weekdays throughout the summer. There are all levels of ability present, so don’t let your child be intimidated if they are a new runner.

As your young runner begins, you may wonder what you should expect and how you can assist him or her in terms of recovery, eating, sleeping, and mental attitude. As a rule, don’t change any aspect of your normal routine. It is very common for your child to be stiff or sore when they first begin to train. This will soon go away.

Any athlete engaged in intensive training is subject to injury. We try to promote stretches and exercises to prevent injury. Each year however, some are still injured. We then put them on other forms of exercise to continue aerobic benefits, but ease some of the strain. For example, we have access to exercise bikes and an elliptical, or use of the pool at various clubs.

A nutritious, well balanced diet is important. Especially on race days, fatty and fried food should be avoided. Small portions of easily digested foods eaten at least 3 hours before competition are best, but water intake should never be limited. Most runners race best a little hungry. Your runner should gradually eat more carbohydrates. Because your child is training, caloric intake can go up. Yea!! When asked, your child should be able to inform coaches of eating habits.

How To Watch Cross Country

Each race has a map of the course. Maps are given to the athletes a couple days prior to the race. Upon arriving, use your map to get the best vantage point for the races. Most courses are set up so that the athletes go by the start or finish area several times. These are often the best places to observe without running a couple of miles yourself. You, however, are free to move about from point to point. Be sure to

stay well off the runner’s path. We will inform your child of the start time of their race. Don’t be late!! If you arrive 20 minutes late, you may miss their whole race.

Do not expect the attention of your son or daughter before the race. They are expected to warm up and prepare for the race ahead. At the conclusion of their race, you can often greet them after they go through the finish chute. They may however have been given a place card. These often must be given to the coach ASAP. Please remind them to do this right away. Be prepared to see a tired child after the race. Many have rubbery legs, glassy

eyes, or feel sick. For most, this soon goes away. Each runner is expected to cool down. Please insist they do this. This is probably more important than the warm-up. It simply can't be skipped. We also expect them to support their teammates who are yet to race. Although we can't race varsity and J.V. together in invitationals, we are still one team, and expect each will support each other. If we are racing out of town, we cannot let team members ride home with anybody without your permission. Please inform a coach if they will not be riding home with the team.

What Else is Needed to Run?

Your child must meet the academic requirements of GR Christian to be eligible for sports. Ask your child what these minimum requirements are.

Your child must also pass a physical exam prior to the season. Grand Rapids Christian High School will notify you when you can get this exam prior to the start of school. If you miss this date(s) you must do it on your own. For the safety of your child, we cannot allow them to race without a physical being passed. (This must be done each year.)

Grand Rapids Christian High also has a policy where both the athlete and parent sign an athletic code. These will be passed out at the beginning of the school year.

Cross Country Camp

Each summer we have a running camp for any and all members of our team. This annual camp takes place in August. This year's camp runs from July 28 to August 1. The camp is very popular with the team. We obviously run each day, but the focus is fun. We want our team to get to know each other, and welcome new members. We place runners in with others of similar talent, so don't let your son or daughter be intimidated. There are brochures available for camp. The cost for the camp is \$145.00. (If your camp fee is paid by July 1, you save \$10.00, for a camp fee of \$135.00) This includes all meals, lodging, and a t-shirt. Camp brochures are available at our kick-off or can be picked up from coach Jager's house throughout the entire summer. The 2007 camp had 106 runners attend.

Health Concerns

After coaching for 17 years, I recommend your child get a preseason blood test. Many great runners have been slowed by anemia. I have seen it personally in our family, and now think a simple blood test could reveal a need for an iron supplement. If you go this route, make sure your doctor checks for ferritin. Ferritin is iron storage and the first sign of trouble. A simple blood test will reveal a need for an iron supplement. If interested, I have additional information on this topic. There are also several useful web sites I can share with you.

don't forget: eaglesrunning.com