

**PARENT'S**  
**UNOFFICIAL**  
**GUIDE**  
**TO**  
**WAYZATA**  
**CROSS COUNTRY**  
**2013**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

**"What do you mean he runs three miles? ... All at once!?!"**

When my son decided to run cross country in 7th grade, I had a few questions: How often will he practice? Will someone be watching him as he navigates the streets? How is it running with boys who are a lot older? And that was just the beginning. As time went on I seemed to have even more questions: Who runs in what race? What is a good race time? What should he be eating and drinking? What kind of shoes should he wear? Socks? Shorts? The list just kept on growing.

This unofficial parents' guide is designed to answer these kinds of questions and more. It also will let you and your athlete know what else is involved in the exciting world of cross country running, like pasta dinners, the year-end banquet, and the chute! We hope that the guide helps minimize those times when you thought, "I wish I had known about that! "

Cross country running has the potential to change your son's life ... and possibly yours. As with most sports, it is demanding and requires a real commitment to many hours of hard work. You will find that because team practices and races consume so many hours, your son's training and racing will leave little extra time beyond what is needed for homework, eating and sleeping. This is not a bad thing because it means that your son must do a better job of managing his time, which usually results in less time for video games, TV, and web surfing. The discipline of balancing school activities and a team sport help develop time management skills that will last a lifetime.

Cross country also builds character. Through his running, your son will develop self-confidence and be less inclined to pay attention to peer pressure. Once he realizes that he has the personal perseverance to run 15-20 miles or more a week, what others think of him makes less difference. And once you realize that he can run 15-20 miles per week and race long distances at high speeds, you will also have a new respect for your son. And you may even be inspired to buy your own pair of running shoes!

## **II. HOW THE TEAM WORKS**

**"When you run together, you're brothers!"**

This is a direct quote from a 7th grade runner when asked how he felt about hanging out with the older guys on the team at the team dinners or on the bus. Many parents may wonder if an environment, which includes such a large age range, is an appropriate one for their 7th or 8th grader, but the system seems to work well for all. The Wayzata program has a great history of the older guys being great mentors to the younger members.

### **Different coaches for different runners**

Cross country running is a no-cut sport. If you sign up and go to practice, you are a team member. Lately, there have been about 150 boys on the high school team and 60 on the middle school squad. In the recent past, there have been three or four coaches.

Generally, one or two coaches are in charge of the *middle schoolers*. They are considered to be the 7th and 8th graders. The Middle School Coach holds the future of the team in his hands. Because they get out of school later, the younger runners start their practices later, run shorter distances than the

older guys, and finish earlier. They learn routes of different mileage around Central Middle School from the coach and guys who have been on the team previously. They put together different "mile plans" based on what type of run the coach has set for the day and what their respective training level is. In general, the younger the boy, the fewer miles he runs per day. But by the end of the first year, most are running 3-4 miles per day. Most of their meets are for only 7th and 8th graders. Occasionally the middle schoolers will run in a JV or C race at a high school meet. Typically, this race is shorter (one to two miles, for example) and is designed for younger or newer racers.

The head coach is in charge of the *varsity runners*. These are the top runners on the team and they will all train together and may comprise as many as 12 to 15 boys. However, at a meet, the boys who officially make up the varsity team are only the top 7 runners, as determined by the coach. The selection of the varsity team for a meet is usually based on race times, not age or grade or length of time on the team. As a result, it is possible to go to a meet and see middle schoolers competing at the varsity level. The varsity lineup at a meet will change during the season, as performances change or injuries occur. Substitutes or alternates train at the highest levels to fill in where needed. These boys generally train at 40-60 miles per week, or more.

The rest of the team makes up the *junior varsity* (this is generally runners in 9th through 12th grade) and the head coach and assistant coach train them. These athletes are the next generation of runners who will take over in the future. Weekly mileage can vary, but is often in the ballpark of 25-45 miles per week. JV runners often alternate in and out with Varsity runners, depending on their times in meets.

### **Different races for different runners**

Many meets have three classes of races: Varsity, junior varsity, and Middle School or C races. All runners run in most meets. However, you have to qualify to run in conference, section and state meets. Varsity and junior varsity races for boys are 5 kilometers or 5K. This is the equivalent of 3.1 miles. As mentioned, C races (or 7th and 8th grade races) are usually 1 mile or 2 miles.

Having said all this, you can see that the youngest guys don't often train with the oldest guys because they are at different levels of development and mileage. However, it is common for all the team members to warm up together. They also ride the bus to and from meets together, and attend team dinners and fundraising events together. These are fun times for the guys and really let them bond as a team.

Speaking from experience, if you have younger sons, this is the group of older guys you want your sons to hang out with. They are usually very good students. They are very encouraging because they know what it takes to start out and succeed in this sport. They are good role models and are often leaders in other groups, whether it is in school or outside school. A lot of these guys also have been on the team for a while, and know how it feels to be in the younger crowd, so the younger guys won't be excluded.

"We few, we happy few,  
we band of brothers  
For he who sheds his blood  
with me today  
Shall be my brother."  
--Shakespeare, *Henry V*

"We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done." –  
Longfellow

### **III. RUNNING GEAR**

**"I thought he just needed a good pair of shoes."**

#### **Shoes**

A good pair of running shoes is absolutely the most important thing your runner needs for gear. It's generally best to go to a store that specializes in running in order to get the personalized attention your son needs to get the right pair of shoes for him. Having the right running shoes is also key to injury prevention. They don't have to be the most expensive pair of shoes in the store; they just have to fit and feel right. There is no one "best" brand-every runner usually has a brand he swears by, but it is the best brand for him, not necessarily for your son.

A good pair of shoes will last 350-500 miles. It's a good idea to note when new shoes are purchased and track the mileage for each pair because worn out shoes can lead to injury. He should always pay attention for excessive wear and tear but a good first check is when the shoes hit 350 miles. If they still seem in good shape and are still comfortable, he can keep running in them but keep checking periodically after that. Get rid of them when they are uncomfortable, i.e., don't have much padding, or when they reach 500 miles ... or when he outgrows them! Keep in mind that at 50 miles a week, he will need new shoes every ten weeks, at least.

#### **Stores and locations**

Here are the names and addresses of four excellent, local running stores (identify your son as a member of Wayzata Cross Country and they will usually give you a team discount of 10 to 15%, if not be sure to compare prices and maybe go somewhere else):

Gear Running Store  
4406 France Avenue South Edina, MN 55410  
952-926-2645 [www.gearrunningstore.com](http://www.gearrunningstore.com)

Gear West Ski and Run  
1908 Wayzata Blvd Long Lake, MN 55356  
952-473-0377 <http://www.gearwest.com>

Marathon Sports  
2312 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street Minneapolis, MN 55410  
612-920-2606 <http://www.marathonrunwalk.com>

Start Line  
12993 Ridgedale Dr Minnetonka, MN 55305 (Ridgehaven)  
952-593-1116 <http://www.start-line.com>

TC Running Company  
6405 City West Parkway, Eden Prairie, MN 55346 (just SE of Shady Oak & Hwy. 62)  
952-944-7386 <http://tcrunningco.com>

TC Running Company  
12862 Bass Lake Rd, Maple Grove, MN, 55369 763-746-0378 <http://tcrunningco.com>

## Things you need to provide: Water bottle and other gear

Your runner should also have something to drink for proper hydration. This could mean bottled water, a reusable water bottle filled with water, or a sports drink like Gatorade or PowerAde. He needs to re-hydrate within the first 30 minutes after running, if possible.

When the boys first start practice in August, they wear T-shirts and shorts. As per the current style, most boys wear long (possibly mesh) athletic shorts. Sometimes the older, more experienced runners choose to wear actual running shorts. These are short, very light and have both an inner layer and outer layer. Generally, the boys wear white cotton socks, often quarter length. Much has been written about the merits of "running socks" which are specifically designed to wick away perspiration, dry quickly and be lightweight. These are an option although they cost more than regular socks. Even Target carries their own brand of running socks.

Bare necessities:

- shoes
- socks
- shorts
- T-shirt
- water bottle

Other things that will come in handy throughout the season are:

- extra socks
- extra T-shirt
- long- sleeved T-shirt for cooler weather
- knit cap
- sweat shirt and sweat pants light
- gloves/wool mittens
- wind/rain resistant running jacket
- small to mid-size gym bag (with a name tag) to put everything in
- towel
- nail clippers, Vaseline, and band-aids

Cold weather **and rain gear** are needed as runners train and run races in all weather unless there is lightning. This includes running through rain and even snow, if it comes to that!

Most of the boys wear a **watch**. This is a useful tool as it allows them to time their runs during practice. Most prefer a digital watch with large numerals. Also, it's good to find one with a stopwatch feature, an alarm feature (this allows them to count down a run backwards if they are trying to reach a particular goal), and some memory for splits. Splits are the times for a portion of a practice or race; for example, your son may want to track his time on the first and/or second mile of a race. FYI, a negative split is when he runs the second half of a race faster than the first.

Usually the younger guys wear the same shoes for running a race as they do for practice, but at some point in their running career they switch to spikes for races. Spikes are lightweight running shoes with metal spikes that protrude from the sole. The length of the spike can be changed depending on the

type and condition of the running surface, but most popular are spikes that are 3/8 inch long. The coaches can give advice on when to wear a particular length of spike and will provide them to your son. Racing shoes without spikes are called flats. Neither of these racing shoes provides the foot or leg with much support, so they are only for races, not practices.

### **What the school/team provides**

Your son will be assigned a locker and issued a lock. He can store the above items in the locker. It's good to try and retrieve the most commonly used items for washing at least once a week. Some time during the first few weeks of practice, he will also be issued a Wayzata singlet (a sleeveless running shirt), shorts and a warm-up suit. He will wear the official uniform to the meets and be responsible for returning them at the end of the season. Lost items will need to be paid for. The warm-ups are quite expensive, and it is not fun to lose them, because it isn't fun to pay for them.

## **IV. TRAINING AND PRACTICES**

### **"It's a training sport."**

Here's how it goes: It may sound simple but the more running you do, the better you get. That's the bottom line. It takes about 6 to 8 weeks to get into decent shape, so for many boys, the cross country season starts in June, right after school ends. If they have been doing Track, the first few weeks will be very low key with relatively low mileage, so that they can rest and recover. The rest of the summer builds an aerobic base of running. While the miles increase over time, they are usually done at an easy pace, one at which a person could talk to a companion at the same time.

### **Summer running/Running Clinic/Captains' Practice**

At Wayzata, summer running can be done on one's own, and/or with other team members. Frequently team members meet on the Luce Line or at the High School and a schedule of these days and times are given out before school ends in June.

Another opportunity for summer running is the Running Clinic at Wayzata High School. This clinic is on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings for the month of June & July, starting on June 16th, from 8:30 am to noon. The runners not only do a running workout, but also work on the woodchip trail system as a service project and as well listen to a classroom lecture on training and running topics. Usually about 80 boys and girls attend. Registration is required so call Eric Jahn (Clinic Coordinator) at 952-475-2251 if interested for a registration form.

Regardless of how your son puts in the summer miles, he should be running and recording his miles on <http://www.kasinkas.com/crosscountry>.

Check the team website for schedules: <http://www.wayzata-xc.org>.

### **Summer registration**

Starting around the middle of July registration for fall sports begins. All participants must be fully registered prior to Coaches' practice. Registration forms are available in the Activities Office at Wayzata High School. Athletes must turn in WHS Eligibility Form, a Coaches Emergency Information Card, Fee Payment (currently \$105) and a Sports Qualifying Physical Examination (or have a current one on file). Visit [www.wayzata.k12.mn.us/whs/athletics](http://www.wayzata.k12.mn.us/whs/athletics) and look for registration info in right menu.

## Coaches' practice

Three weeks before the start of school, official Coaches' practices begin. These are mandatory for all team members and all registered team members must attend or let his coach know beforehand why he won't be there. Excuses such as "I'm tired" or "I'm sore" are not going to work. The younger team members get to know the older ones during this time as they all warm up together and have team meetings together.

The coaches have a training strategy for each boy, based on his ability, experience, development and attitude. The boys go on runs in groups based on similar mileage, in the neighborhood surrounding WHS & Central MS.

For the first two weeks practice will start at 8:30 am at the WHS track stadium entrance. For the varsity runners there is also an evening practice. For the third week the practice generally start earlier in the morning and in the afternoon to prepare your son for the after school practice schedule. Your son will receive a schedule of all the practice times and other important information so be sure to ask for it. Information can also be retrieved from the website at [www.wayzata-xc.org](http://www.wayzata-xc.org)

## Regular practice

When school starts, **Regular practices** begin after school every day. Again, these are all mandatory and coaches should be notified if your son cannot make it. For the high schoolers practice begins at 2:40 and will end between 4 and 4:45. For the middle schools practice is at after school at CMS and will end by 4:30. Varsity runners will also practice on Saturday mornings for about 2 hours.

## The language of workouts

***Distance*** (or *over-distance*) runs are steady paced runs at a pace where your son can talk. These runs are longer than the races. By the time your son is a sophomore or junior, he will be comfortably running ten miles or more continuously (a double digit run). The primary purpose of these runs is to gain endurance and to provide a day of recovery (yes, these runs are "easy" days).

***Intervals*** (or *repeats*) are workouts where after jogging a warm-up, the boys will run fast for one to six minutes and then jog recover for one to twelve minutes. A typical workout might be eight quarter-miles (comparable to once around the track) in about 90 seconds each with a three-minute rest between each fast run. This workout might be run in a park, a school playfield, on the Luce Line, etc. The primary purpose of these runs is to improve running efficiency, strength, and speed.

***Threshold*** (or an *A-T run* or a *Tempo run*) runs begin with a couple miles of jogging and then have up to 25 minutes of very fast continuous running and then conclude with a couple of miles of jogging. ***Cruise Intervals***, a modification of a Threshold workout, are at threshold pace (slower than regular intervals, but faster than distance pace) and follow the same pattern of Interval workouts. However, they are usually longer than intervals and have much shorter rests (recoveries) in between the runs. The primary purpose of these is to develop a tolerance to pain and efficiency at race pace.

***Taper*** runs are usually two easy miles and strides (short 50 yard sprints). They are usually run the day before races and are quite popular with the boys. These get the boys fresh for meets.

***Fartlek*** (a Swedish word that means "speed-play") are runs that allow the runners to alternate speeds depending on their whim and condition.

**Abdominal and Upper Body** workouts are simply strength work for the runner's core. They will be doing sit-ups, crunches, push-ups, dips, pull-ups, etc.

**Base training** is distance runs in pre-season or early-season to gain strength for the year.

**Cool-down** is the jogging after practice and meets for relaxation and elimination of waste products from leg muscles.

**Recovery running**: Easy running the day after a workout or race.

**Stretching**: Exercises to loosen up the body for running.

**Warm-up**: Jogging and stretching to limber up for running.

## **The routine**

Although every coach has his own method of training, it seems that every week of training during the season has a mix of hard and easy runs, a couple days of faster paced runs and one day featuring a long run, usually Saturday. Each has a purpose such as increasing strength, endurance, speed or running efficiency. There is an article by Coach Bill Miles on the team website that describes the purpose and physiology of workouts in more detail.

## **Your part**

A big part of your job is to encourage your son --- when he is sore and tired, when he didn't get the time he wanted, when he got sick to his stomach at the end of a race (this is not uncommon), and / or when he is feeling overwhelmed by school and practice. Also, be sure to talk to your son about how training is going. And if something is not going well, explore it with him. Make sure you both understand how the season is going and what the coach expects of him.

## **V. HOW TO ATTEND A MEET**

**"Cross Country: the only sport where the parents are in shape!"  
-seen on the back of a T-shirt**

A cross country meet is something like a high-tech medieval fair. The athletes wear brightly colored clothing and often congregate under the same-colored tents, designating their school and team. Many are jogging around the grounds in groups, warming up for their races. Coaches are striding around the area with clipboards and timing devices. Parents are everywhere, milling around, trying to find the starting and finishing lines. And from all this chaos comes organization athletes show up for their races at the appointed times and finish down to the tenth of a second. And at the State Meet, all runners now wear chips in their shoes for precise timing and identification.

"Fair, market, acrobats, fun, and thieves."

--- Menander, Athenian comic playwright, describing the Olympic Games in 394 A.D.

## **Before the meet**

So here's how to navigate a meet. Meets are usually held in parks, on golf courses or, occasionally, on the grounds of a high school. Call the *WHS Athletic Office* 763-745-6621 the morning of the meet for race times and directions to the meet. Sometimes, based on changing road conditions, the directions can change later in the day, so it might be worth another call to check it out.

The boys are occasionally excused from school early the day of a meet. The coach sends a list of those who are competing that day to the appropriate school for an excused early dismissal. While they can leave their backpacks in their lockers, some boys take them along in order to do homework while they're waiting.

While the boys' bus will travel before rush hour starts, most parents usually leave work or home just about the time traffic starts to, get heavy. Leave plenty of time to get to the venue and find a parking place, or you may miss the race.

## **Plan ahead**

The weather is usually hotter or colder than you're prepared for. If it's hot out, bring water, a hat and sunscreen for yourself. If it's cool or cold, wear a lot of layers. Always wear comfortable shoes that you know can stand up to grass, dirt and mud. Encourage your son to stay layered up and warm, so that his muscles don't tighten up before the race. Unless he's loose, he may **not perform as well or he may incur an injury**. When the weather is chilly, the boys can wear cold-weather clothing under their uniform, as well as hats and gloves. Tell them if they get too warm during the race, they can always take them off and throw them to a teammate on the side of the course.

If you've signed up to take fruit to the meet, make sure it gets on the bus with the boys or you can take it to the meet yourself. You will want to be there fairly early with the snacks if you do the latter, as the first racers will be looking for them when their race is over. The boys should take care to minimize eating or drinking in the immediate hours before a race as it can lead to side stitches and vomiting. Experience is the only real guide and each boy will learn his own tolerance as he goes.

## **Scope out the site**

Once you arrive, you need to determine where the starting line is for your son's race. The girls will have a different starting line from the boys in many cases, and the younger runners will often have a different starting line from the older runners. Ask questions until you determine where the appropriate line is. If you see your son, he may know where it is. You can also look around to see where the Wayzata camp is. The boys and girls usually have different campsites, but your best bet is to look for Wayzata blue and gold. The finish line is at the same spot for all races because it has a big timing clock next to it, and it doesn't get moved around. There is also a *chute* made of ropes or pennant flags just prior to the clock that the athletes run down to get to the finish line, so it's hard to miss.

At most meets, there are 3 types of races: Varsity, JV and Middle School races. (Who runs in which race is described in the section entitled "How the Team Works.") There is often a corresponding girls' race for each boys' race. The order of the races is not always the same from meet to meet, but calling

the Athletic Hotline or checking the website will tell you when each race is scheduled. The race officials usually do a pretty good job of getting the races off at the stated time, but it's good to leave a little "flex time" in order to make sure you see your son's race.

You will be able to see your son at the start of the race and the finish. There is usually a good spot somewhere else on the course to see the middle of the race and they often go past that spot twice. Just follow the crowd, as parents who have been there before will head in that direction. Sometimes these three spots (start, finish, and middle) are fairly far apart and you have to hustle to get there and back to see as much of the race as possible. (That's why the parents are in such good shape. Of course, a fair number of them are runners themselves.)

### **What to do**

You will get a glimpse of your son as he runs by. Cheer for him and for all the other Wayzata runners as they go by. You can cheer for the leaders, the stragglers and everyone in between if you wish--they all work so hard, everyone deserves all the cheering they can get! It's also good to cheer for the Wayzata girl's team when they run. And don't forget to take lots of pictures of the runners--all the boys, not just your son--as these pictures can be brought to the year-end banquet to give to the boys.

Don't hover around your son at the camp. This will probably embarrass him. It's OK to let him know you've arrived by waving or saying hi, but he is trying to get ready for his race and needs some time to concentrate. At the end of the race, you should meet your son and tell him what a good job he did, whether he thinks so or not. Anyone who can finish a race has done a great job. He may look awful or even get sick to his stomach, but he will be all right in a few minutes. When he reaches this point, he needs to do a cool down run so his muscles don't seize up.

### **After the race**

You can stay for as much of the meet as you want. It is expected that all the boys will stay through the entire meet and return to school as a group on the bus. If you need to take your son home right after his event, you need to write a note and give it to the coach before the meet. It gets upsetting when a lot of boys are not there at the end of the meet, and the coaches have no idea what has happened to them.

You should tell your son that it is expected that the boys help clean up the camp and transport any equipment back to the bus in a cheerful manner. Same thing at set-up when they arrive. The coaches are busy with paperwork and the racing, and can use some help.

## **VI. HOW TEAMS/ RUNNERS SCORE**

**"It's a numbers game."      As they say, timing is everything...**

Baseball isn't the only game known for all its statistics. Every time your son runs in a race, his performance is recorded and ranked. Many meets are large invitational meets and often the results can be found later that same day on [www.raceberryjam.com](http://www.raceberryjam.com). Smaller meets will not be posted on this site, but within 24 hours can be found at [www.wayzata-xc.org](http://www.wayzata-xc.org). The results are given out to the boys a day or two after the meet. The coach will discuss the results of these meets with the boys in a team meeting the next day. If you attend a meet, you can get your son's time by either using your own stopwatch or watching closely at the finish line to see what time is on the large finish clock when he crosses the line.

All these times result in individual and team rankings-locally, regionally, statewide and nationally. There are also team records and school records. ***Lettering criteria*** are tied to how athletes place in meets, years of experience, and many other factors. It is complicated, but a detailed explanation can be found at the team's website: [www.wayzata-xc.org](http://www.wayzata-xc.org).

### **What's a good race time**

A good race time depends on a lot of factors: age of the athlete, physical maturity, genetics, race day weather conditions, training condition of the runner, mental attitude ... even lunch that day. As a parent, you can check out what the top runners in each race category are achieving by looking at the results on [www.raceberryjam.com](http://www.raceberryjam.com). Naturally, if your son achieves an athletic letter, he will have pretty good race times. The top runners in the State Meet generally run 5Ks in about 15 to 16 minutes.

### **Team scoring**

***How is team scoring*** calculated for a meet? It's actually quite easy. The team with the lowest score wins. The score is derived by adding up the places of the first five runners from the team. Therefore, the lowest score attainable is if your team's runners finish in the first five spots (1st + 2nd + 3rd + 4th + 5th), which makes a score of 15. Your team's 6th and 7th runners can also contribute because they may "push back" the place of someone on an opposing team. For example, our 6h runner may beat another team's 5th runner, thereby the other team would have a higher score. Examples of scored meets can be found at [www/wayzata-xc.org](http://www/wayzata-xc.org).

The runners are guided toward the finish line by the ***chute***. The chute is a barrier separating the runners from the crowd. It can be some kind of fencing or simply string attached to stakes, but it functions to narrow down the stream of runners so that they come in one at a time. Officials make sure that the boys go down the chute in the order in which they finished. Then an official gives each runner a piece of paper with his place number marked on it, or the boys rip off the bottom of the number they are issued for the race (and which is pinned to their singlet) and turn it in. The bottom line is that everyone is timed, given a number, and scored. Even the very last person from all the teams is timed which gives each participant a chance to get their own PR (personal record- sometimes called a PB – personal best).

### **What teams and runners are at each meet? It depends.**

Wayzata generally competes in invitational meets. They feature 10-15 teams from the area. Sometimes only a certain number of top runners go to these. There are also 7th and 8th grade meets for the younger team members. Occasionally, Wayzata will enter their top JV runners in Varsity Invitationals to give those runners an opportunity for a successful varsity experience. Toward the end of the season, there are grade-level championships where boys compete against others in the same grade.

The 12 fastest team members race in the varsity race at the conference championship meet. The rest of the team has the opportunity to race in the JV race. The top 7 runners (plus two alternates) run at the section championship meet. At the section meet, if the team finishes in the top two positions, then the whole varsity team goes to the State Meet. Otherwise, only those on our team finishing in the top ten go to the State Meet.

## **The true definition of success**

In summary, there may be more than 200 runners in a JV race or a middle school race. Only one of these boys will win the race and receive a little piece of paper with a "1" on it, and possibly a ribbon or a medal. The true definition of success in running often has nothing to do with ribbons or medals. Every runner can feel good about a race. If your son has done his best in a particular race, has given it all he has, then--even if his time isn't as good as a previous race--he has succeeded. This sport is so demanding that only a rare few even choose to participate. Boys who make the personal commitment to run six days a week are to be commended, no matter what their race times are. In addition, personal records (or **PRs**) are set each time your son beats his previous personal best time. These are the most important records of all!

"in running, it doesn't matter whether you come in first, in the middle of the pack, or last. You can say, "I have finished." There is a lot of satisfaction 'in that."

--Fred Lebow,  
past president of New  
York City Road Runners

## **VII. TEAM EVENTS**

### **"There is no 'I' in team."**

Running can be a very solitary sport, and many people enjoy the contemplative nature of running alone. However, part of the fun of cross country comes from being on a team. Running together naturally makes it a group event. But there are also events for the team members that don't involve running.

### **Team dinners/Carbos**

One of the ways that the team gets together and bonds is through *team dinners*. On nights before important meets, a potluck dinner is held at the home of one of the boys on the team. Parents sign up to prepare and deliver food to the host's house; some stay to help the host set up and clean up. Otherwise, it is an event for the boys and their coaches. The guys get some down time to get to know each other, catch up with each other and generally goof around. They come in and eat, watch some TV, maybe play basketball or Frisbee and then go-all in just about an hour or so.

Sometimes the younger guys don't think they will fit in at these dinners, but that is not true. Many of the older guys started out when they were young, too, and will happily welcome younger runners. Sometimes the younger boys use these occasions to ask questions they have regarding cross country.

There is usually one team dinner with the girls' cross country team called the **Great Cake Bake Off**. This is usually held in the High School Cafeteria at the end of September.

## **Alumni meet**

The *Alumni Meet* is the official kick-off to the season. It's held on the Saturday morning after the first week of Coaches' practice at the high school. All team members and coaches, both current and past, are invited, as are any family members who want to participate. The girls' cross country team also has attended the alumni meet in the last several years, which makes it an even larger event!

## **End-of-the-season banquet**

The *end-of-the-season banquet* is the official end of the season. It is held usually in the middle of November. All the coaches, athletes and their families, and Athletic Office staff are invited. This is a really fun evening, which celebrates the efforts of the boys and their coaches over the season. The boys are recognized with awards-both serious and funny. The celebration is a dessert potluck.

## **St. John's Games**

The boys play team-building games during the season that are known as the St. John's Games (they are modeled after activities used by the St. John's University X-C Team). These games include free-throw shooting, egg-toss for distance, running trivia, etc. Your son will be placed on one of six teams that include runners from all grades.

## **VIII. HOW PARENTS CAN PARTICIPATE**

**"What can I do? I'm not a runner."**

### **Attend mandatory parent/athlete meeting prior to season**

Cross country running is definitely a participatory sport and you don't even have to be a runner to participate! But first things first: there is a mandatory parent/athlete/coaches meeting held at WHS. usually the Monday starting the second week of Coaches' Practice. This meeting is a chance for parents and athletes to meet and hear from the coaches and captains. Very important information, schedules and meet map packets are given out at this time. This is also the time for parents to sign up to volunteer their time and support for the team.

### **Snacks, Dinners, Fundraising, Booster Club**

You can donate fruit for the meets, help with fundraising, hosting a carbo, or organize the team banquet. The best part is that you get to meet a great group of guys and their families when you get involved --- and it's a fun group. You should join the Booster Club and designate the money to boys cross country. This money helps support the team in many ways such as video equipment, bus costs, and food costs for the Cake Bake off and photos costs for the pictures taken by the coaches. In addition, this year money will go to pay for an Assistant Coach at the Middle School.

### **Attend meets**

Going to the meets is a great way to participate. The boys really appreciate the support, both for themselves and for the rest of the team.

## **Check with your runner**

Ask your son for information. There are often handouts with schedules, results, awards, rules and rosters, not to mention order forms for official team photos and T-shirts. Initial information is handed out at the Mandatory Meeting in August.

You can also participate by making sure that your son is physically prepared. Make sure he is getting enough rest, especially a good night's sleep. Two other key areas are nutrition and injuries. Both of these deserve their own section.

## **IX. NUTRITION**

### **"I'm giving up pop."**

Eating takes on a whole new meaning when your son starts running. He needs to refuel after practicing or racing. Some boys like to eat right away, but others don't feel like eating for a while. Some can eat anything before or after running, but some guys are quite particular. All of these things are normal. The main thing is that when he eats, he needs to eat nutritious foods, not just junk foods with empty calories.

"You might be a cross country runner if they've banned you from the "All you can eat" night at spaghetti restaurants."  
--old cross country joke

### **Calories: Lots of the right kind**

Sedentary teenage boys need to eat 2800 calories per day. Your son needs to add 600 calories per hour of running. Many runners are thin. Part of this is self-selection. Heavier boys don't like to run because it's hard to carry all that extra weight around. A rule of thumb for weight for runners is 2 pounds per inch of height. Some boys won't even make this weight because they are growing so fast during these high-growth years.

Naturally your son should eat three meals a day. Breakfast is very important and can be a whole-wheat cereal with fruit and low-fat milk. Orange juice is also a good idea. If your son has an early morning practice, sometimes a glass of OJ is all he can manage to get down and still have a good run. Then he can eat his nutritious breakfast when he returns.

Dinner may often include pasta, runners really crave the carbs and their bodies need them for fuel. Don't forget the protein and vegetables. Milk and water are important hydrators. Snacks should be low fat and can have carbs. Fatty snacks like chips or doughnuts are going to make it hard to run the next day. A late night bowl of cereal is often a good choice.

### **Protein is important**

Most runners don't get enough protein. Protein is needed to replace amino acids burned during exercise and to repair muscles. This means your runner should have some protein at every meal. Snacks should also contain protein. Some boys have a fruit smoothie everyday with protein powder added.

In summary, a low-carb diet is not an alternative for a runner; a healthy, well-balanced diet featuring as few pre-made, processed foods as possible is optimum and an important part of his training.

It's best not to eat anything less than three hours before racing or practicing. Eating too close to running can lead to side stitches, a painful but not serious condition.

### **Hydration**

Proper hydration is equally important to proper intake of solid food. Athletes who replace lost fluids and carbohydrates within the first 30 to 60 minutes after exercising recover more quickly than those who wait. This could mean the drinking Gatorade, Powerade, or water. Obviously, drinking fluids is particularly enough important in warm or hot weather.

"You might be a cross country runner if you haven't had a pop in six months."

--old cross country joke

Often runners will drink only water in social situations where others may be drinking pop. It pays to have a lot of bottled water on hand!

### **Window of Opportunity**

Immediately after a particularly hard workout or a race, there is a thirty minute period where the body can replace its glycogen stores. If this opportunity is lost, the body will not be ready to restore this glycogen until 24 hours later and the next day's training will suffer. The body benefits from 50 to 100 g of carbohydrates, 10 to 25 g of protein, and 24 to 32 ounces of fluid. (a Power Bar and a Gatorade or a bagel with peanut butter and a Gatorade provide 50 g of carbs and 10 g of protein). This should be followed up with a good meal within two and a half hours.

## **X. INJURIES**

**"My (fill in the blank) hurts!"**

Sometimes injuries set in. When a boy begins running, either for the first time or after an extended lay-off, he will have sore leg muscles. This is normal and will go away after a few days. The third day is the worst; it should get better after that. Make sure he knows to let the coaches and you know of his injuries or persistent aches.

### **What's normal?**

Sometimes aches and pains develop. It's useful to consider the shoes. Even though they may be the proper fit for him, his stride may make him a 'hard heel-striker'. In this case, new insoles or inserts can offer more protection. If his knees, hips or ankles start to hurt, it is usually a good idea to start icing the area immediately-several times a day, for 10 minutes at a time. There are bags of ice available in the training area near the locker room, as well as a tub of iced water where the athletes can soak their sore legs. At home, it's useful to have a bag of frozen peas or corn in the freezer to use for icing. Your son can just throw it back in the freezer when he's finished.

Blisters are another common complaint. Fortunately, new technology in bandaging has brought out the Blister Pack. A box of these can be purchased at Target. Each 'pack' is cut to fit the blister with almost instant relief!

## What isn't normal?

The bottom line is that each boy knows his own body and should seek treatment as he sees fit, but if your son experiences a sharp pain or the pain lasts for three or four days, he definitely should see the WHS Athletic Trainer. Your son should not try to run through sharp or persistent pain, as this may only aggravate an unknown condition. There are trainers at the high school and they are great and a valuable asset. They will give your son an initial diagnosis and perhaps prescribe some treatment or recommend that your son see a doctor. If they recommend that he see a doctor, then your son can only come back to practice with a release signed by a doctor. If your son does have to stop running while he heals, he may do cross training to maintain his aerobic conditioning. This could be riding an exercise bike or swimming, for example.

## Injury nomenclature

Here are some terms describing injuries that you may commonly hear, but not be truly familiar with:

side stitch: this is a muscle spasm under the ribs. It's very painful but is not a true injury, and you can run through it. It's best avoided by not eating within three hours of running.

shin splint: this term describes a whole bunch of lower leg pains. Poor conditioning or running on surfaces that are too hard can cause it.

stress fracture: this is an internal bone injury that can be found in either the upper or lower leg. It is serious and needs at least 6 weeks of rest.

Osgood-Schlatter Disease: a common cause of sore knees, especially in adolescent boys who are very athletic. It is caused by the pull of the quadriceps (thigh muscles) on the patellar tendon (just under the kneecap) where it attaches to the shinbone. This is a self-limiting condition will remedy itself over time in most cases.

## XI. HELPFUL AND INTERESTING WEBSITES

<a href="http://www.wayzata-xc.org">http://www.wayzata-xc.org</a>	Team's website
<a href="http://www.raceberryjam.com">http://www.raceberryjam.com</a>	Local race results, rankings and more
<a href="http://dyestat.com">http://dyestat.com</a>	Home of High School XC
<a href="http://www.runmdra.org">http://www.runmdra.org</a>	Minnesota Distance Running Association
<a href="http://www.mshsl.org">http://www.mshsl.org</a>	Minnesota State High School League
<a href="http://www.teamusaminnesota.org/">http://www.teamusaminnesota.org/</a>	Info on Minnesota runners at national & world levels
<a href="http://www.runningtimes.com/">http://www.runningtimes.com/</a>	Monthly running magazine
<a href="http://www.runnersworld.com/">http://www.runnersworld.com/</a>	Monthly running magazine
<a href="http://downthebackstretch.blogspot.com">http://downthebackstretch.blogspot.com</a>	Daily news about running in Minnesota

## XII. CREDITS

94% of the material in this book was written by Laurie Zickert for her son's Cross Country Team (Kyle ran at Edina). It was stolen shamelessly from them because it was so well written and informative. Ann DesRoches, whose son Chris ran X-C for us from 1998 to 2003 and whose daughter ran for Wayzata's girls, wrote the other 6%. Ann removed all references to the hated Edina Hornets and added other info that is specific to Wayzata. If you have found this guide helpful, please thank them at the next meet. All errors and misinformation are my responsibility and I know that I should have taken typing in high school.

Yours in running,  
Bill Miles